

# THE PENETRATION OF MONEY ECONOMY IN JAPAN

AND

*Its Effects upon Social and Political Institutions*

BY

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## PREFACE

No period in the whole economic history of Japan is more significant than the period of transition from natural economy to money economy. With the rise of money economy, there developed a moneyed class. Towards the middle of the eighteenth century, this class was coming into prominence, a process which meant the gradual breakdown of traditions of feudal Japan. Up to this time generation after generation followed an established routine of production and consumption. But with the penetration of money economy, new economic problems arose. No longer could the scholars afford to dispense with financial matters as a mean and sordid topic. In Japan, therefore, the penetration of the money economy was epoch-making not only from the point of view of economic history but also because it stimulated scholarly consideration of economic problems.

The literature that was produced during this period may be roughly classified as follows: (1) encyclopedic handbooks, (2) writings presented to the rulers, (3) essays and discourses, (4) general treatises on political economy, (5) miscellanies.

The encyclopedic handbooks contain all the usages and customs relating to land systems, taxation and the general economic life of feudal Japan. Some of the more important works of this kind are *Jikata Bonrei Roku* (A Manual of Rural Customs), *Den-en Pwisetsu* (A Rural Handbook) and *Jikata Ochibo Shu* (A Collection of Scattered Rice Ears from the Country).



The writings presented to the rulers consisted of memorials, pamphlets and books. Memorials, or *Josho*, were spontaneously presented to the Shogun or daimyos in order to call their attention to the most urgent problems or needs of the time; and they were written not only by the scholars but by common people. The pamphlets and books were usually written by various scholars at the request of rulers who wanted to utilize scholarly knowledge in the solution of the new social and economic problems.

Essays and discourses formed the largest group of economic writings produced during the Togugawa period. Some essays on agriculture, such as Komiyama Masahide's *Nosei Zayū* (A Guide to Rural Administration) and Man-o Tokiharu's *Kwan-no Kohonroku* (Considerations on the Means of Fostering Husbandry and of Strengthening the Basis of the Life of the People), were written primarily for rural administrators; while many others are general discourses on good husbandry. These latter had a wide circulation. Essays and discourses on money, which began to appear in greater numbers after the eighteenth century, are of little value from the theoretical point of view, for none of them followed consistently any particular line of argument in regard to a fundamental economic principle. From the standpoint of economic history, however, these writings on money are invaluable contributions. Their importance in this respect lies in the fact that they dealt directly with problems of the day instead of with abstractions. Hence these discussions, with all their logical inconsistencies, are most illuminating in bringing before us the interplay of social forces during the period of change from a rice to a money economy. The essays and discourses on trade were written chiefly as guides to the merchant class. Little theorizing but a vast deal of moralizing is to be found in their pages. All in all, however, they reflect most vividly the degree of com-

mercial development, the status and the ethics of the merchant class during this period.

The general treatises on political economy written during the Tokugawa period are also helpful in the study of the economic history of Japan for they are crowded with discussions of the various social, economic and political problems that were current in those days. "Political economy" in this period meant a great deal more than our present limited usage of the term implies. It included all the subjects related to the maintenance of the peace and good order of society. Take, for example, as a representative treatise, Dazai Shundai's *Keizai Roku* (A Treatise on Political Economy). It consists of the following ten books: (I) Introduction to Political Economy, (II) Ceremonials, (III) Governmental Positions, (IV) Astronomy, Geography and Calendar, (V) Finance, (VI) Religion and Education, (VII) Military Affairs, (VIII) Criminal Law, (IX) Civil Law, (X) Administrative Policy. In these heterogeneous books, no attempt was made by the author to distinguish economic elements from political elements; in fact, no such distinction existed in the minds of the writers of this period. They could not consider economics except in connection with the ethical principles underlying good government. The first author who made a somewhat clear distinction between economics and government is, according to Professor Takimoto, Shingu Ryotei. He divided his treatise on political economy, called *Yaburasya no Tsuzukuri Banashi* (A Talk on Mending a Broken House) into three books, namely, (I) Finance, (II) Administration, (III) Jurisprudence. Yet the contents were still confusing, and no attempt was made by the author to formulate any definite economic theory.

The most spontaneous reflections of the economic tendencies of the later Tokugawa period are the miscellanies, or *Zui-Hitsu* (writing as the pen names): such as Ota Nanpo's

*Ichitwa Ichigen* (One Talk, One Word), Kamizawa Teikan's *Okinagusa* (Scribbles of an Old Man), and Oyamada Kosei's *Matsuya Hikki* (A Sketch Book of Matsuya). These commentaries contain random thoughts of the writers on various social, economic and political problems; quotations and abstracts from other books; and descriptions of historical and contemporary events. They were written not for the public but for the private enjoyment of the authors themselves; and it is natural, therefore, that they should give us a picture of the economic life of the period, more informal but more informing than the weightier treatises.

The majority of the writers on social, economic and political problems in the Tokugawa period, however, are the scholars of Chinese classics. Since the establishment of the Tokugawa régime, which had put an end to the constant strife among rival and warlike military clans, peace had been maintained throughout the two hundred and fifty years of the Shogunate, and the mind of the rulers had turned from warfare to administrative problems. They first sought for the principles of good government in Chinese classics; thus there arose a group of brilliant scholars in this field, among whom were Kumazawa Banzan, Arai Hakuseki, Ogyu Sorai, Dazai Shundai, Hayashi Shihei, etc. They were the most prominent exponents of the feudal economy and the strongest opponents of all new tendencies that were threatening the security of feudal society. The rulers not only patronized these scholars but often trusted important administrative matters to their hands. Thus, for instance, Ogyu Sorai served the fifth Shogun, Tsunayoshi, and Arai Hakuseki was instrumental in carrying through the drastic currency reform during the administration of Shogun Iyenobu; while the daimyo of Sendai had Hayashi Shihei, and that of Okayama had Kumazawa Banzan, as counsellor. In fact, the majority of the officials of the Shogunate or the daimiates were stu-

dents of Chinese classics, and many of them were exponents of feudal economy in their writings as well as in their offices.

There were, however, a few bold critics of the Tokugawa régime, although such critics incurred the wrath of the ruling class. Thus Umetsugu Kisei, who was a royalist Shintoist, was imprisoned and later exiled to Macajiro Island, where he died after fourteen years. Uyezaki Kinschiro died in prison as a result of presenting memorials to the Shogun in which he boldly criticized his minister, Masumata Terchu no Kami. Yamaga Soko was exiled because he considered the orthodox Chinese scholars as both narrow and stupid. And many others met with similar fate. In the western part of Japan, however, where the governmental censorship was not so strict as in Yedo, the headquarters of the Shogunate, more liberal scholars, such as Nakai Chikuzan, Yamakata Hoshu and Kaiho Seiryô, were active, and very freely discussed social problems without being bound by the rigid traditions of Chinese classical learning.

One of the significant facts about the literature of the Tokugawa period—in contradistinction to the one preceding it—is that not all the writers were of the upper classes; i.e., the samurai, the nobility or the priesthood. Literature in general was greatly popularized during the Tokugawa period, and many commoners took to writing. Thus not a few works were written by men who were born among merchants and traders. A most conspicuous example is Yamakata Hoshu. He was an apprentice of a money changer in Osaka, and was later adopted by Yamakata Heiyemon, who was also a money changer. While he was engaged in business, he became a disciple of Nakai Chikuzan, and later distinguished himself as a great scholar in the field of political economy.

Although there are minor differences among the several types of writers above enumerated, we may summarize some characteristics common to all economic, social and political

thinkers of the period. First, they held that agriculture was the foundation of the state. Even Nakai Chikuzan, who had more sympathy with the merchant class, recognized the agricultural class as the sole producer of wealth. Such extreme feudal economists as Ogyu Sorai and Kumazawa Banzan were openly antagonistic to the merchant class, declaring that its decline should never be regretted and that every effort should be made to maintain the agricultural class, the true foundation of the state. The critics of the Tokugawa régime argued that the decline of agriculture was a clear proof of bad government; while the reformers concentrated their efforts on keeping the ideas and institutions of the towns out of the village communities. In short, agriculture was the centre of gravity for all social and economic thought of the Tokugawa period.

In the second place, the writers of the Tokugawa period could not free themselves from the belief that money was the most degrading element in society. The people of this period were imbued with the Chinese philosophy, in which stability of society was glorified above anything else. It was quite natural, therefore, that they should be alarmed by the disintegrating tendencies which they could not fail to see in the spread of the money economy. None of the writers recognized a constructive process in the disintegrating tendencies, and no theory of political economy appeared to justify the money economy. Indeed, the writers were too much in the heart of the changes themselves to have any adequate perspective on the process that was going on before their eyes.

The study of economic conditions in the Tokugawa period is made the more difficult by the fact that not all the works produced during this period are available at present. At this time, the printing press had not yet been introduced into Japan. Books written by the scholars were either copied by their disciples or engraved on wood for a wider circulation.

Since there was no regulation on copyright, various individuals copied by hand or engraved any books they chose; and as a result, various versions of these works have come down to us, versions which are often so different that one has considerable difficulty in deciding which version is the original. At present, however, thanks to the effort of Professor Takimoto and his colleagues, we have thirty-six volumes of *Bibliotheca Japonica Aëconomiae Politicæ*, containing nearly two hundred social and economic works produced during the Tokugawa period. The editors have made a supreme effort to secure the authentic version of each writing. They have gone to the descendants of the writers in a search for the original copies, and to the descendants of the disciples of the scholars in an attempt to ascertain the authenticity of the copies which have been found. Not infrequently the descendants of the daimyos who patronized the scholars do possess the original manuscripts in the chests of their family treasures; but unfortunately they often refuse to let these possessions pass into the hands of the editors. Thus many of the writings of the Tokugawa period are still lying unpublished in the treasure chests of old families. For instance, Professor Takimoto regretfully tells us of a certain distinguished family which has in hiding Yamakata Hoshu's book, *Yamato Ben*. It is this work which discusses the price of rice in relation to the general price-level. But since this family alone possesses a copy, and its members persistently refuse to let it be examined, Professor Takimoto cannot make it available to the public. Professor Kuroita also reports that he has found chestfuls of manuscripts hidden in almost all the temples and old family mansions that he has visited.

It is in these chests of manuscripts that most of the official records now available have been found. The Tokugawa government itself made no systematic effort to preserve

official records. Records were kept by various individuals and stored in their private bureaus. Since there was no definite arrangement for handing down the reports to succeeding officers, the manuscripts were generally inherited by the descendants of the officials as part of the family property. After the Meiji revolution, the statesmen of the new government were greatly handicapped by this lack of official records of the Tokugawa period. As a result, several committees were organized in order to compile historical materials. The compilation that is most important for the study of economic history is the *Tokugawa Rizai Kaiyo*, or the Encyclopedic Handbook of the Financial and Economic Institutions of the Tokugawa Shogunate, published by the department of finance in 1880. At the beginning of the present century, another collection of historical materials called *Koji Rui-en* (A Collection of Historical Data) was compiled and edited by a group of scholars under the auspices of the government. Ten volumes of this collection contain all the important materials we have on the industrial, commercial and agricultural life not only of the Tokugawa period but of all ages.

The professors of the Kyoto Imperial University have recently announced that they are about to publish a new series of the economic and social writings of old Japan. Thus more and more ancient writings are being brought to light by scholars of the present generation. It is to be hoped, therefore, that the economic history of Japan will prove a most resourceful field of study and investigation in the near future.

The following study is an attempt to interpret in the light of an analysis of economic conditions the various institutional changes of the later Tokugawa period, culminating in the Meiji revolution of 1867. The writer wishes to express her deep gratitude to Professor Simkhovitch, who first sug-

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## CHAPTER I

### THE ECONOMIC ORGANIZATION OF JAPAN PRECEDING THE PENETRATION OF MONEY ECONOMY

MONEY economy did not penetrate in Japan until after the seventeenth century; that is, after the middle of the Tokugawa period. The Tokugawa Shogunate was the last of the several Shogunates that had risen and fallen during the long period of struggle among the military clans since the end of the twelfth century. Originally the Shogun was appointed by the Mikado, or the emperor, to maintain peace by subduing provincial wars. Since he had great command of military force, he succeeded in assuming a great deal of political power, until, by the time of Tokugawa Iyeyasu, the power of the Mikado had been reduced to such an extent that his function was limited to the maintenance of the court ceremonials. Thus the Tokugawa Shogun succeeded in establishing a complete form of feudal government with himself as the supreme lord.

In feudal Japan, rice was not only the principal food of the people but the most important medium of exchange, which served as the standard of value. The foundation of the economic life of the country lay, therefore, in the production and distribution of rice. In such a period of rice economy, the most essential factor of production was, of course, land; but the concept of land as private property was still quite obscure in the beginning of the Tokugawa period. There existed a vague idea that the entire land of Japan ultimately belonged to the Mikado, who was the sole direct descendant of the founder of the country, but in the period when the

power of the Shogun was so predominant that the imperial court was reverently secluded from mundane affairs, the right of the royal family was quite safely disregarded and the Shogun could dispose of the land in any way he chose. However, since rice was the standard of value, the Shogun and the daimyos, or the feudal lords, were more interested in the produce of land than in the area, and consequently, the wealth of each daimyo was measured in terms of rice. In the beginning of the seventeenth century, the wealth of the entire country was calculated to be twenty-eight million *koku*,<sup>1</sup> of which eight million *koku* was the possession of the Tokugawa Shogun and 40,247 *koku* was reserved for the imperial court, while the rest was divided among the daimyos, of whom there were about two hundred and seventy. The daimyos were of two kinds: the *fudai* daimyos, i.e., those who had been more or less dependent upon the Tokugawa family for some generations before the establishment of the Shogunate, and the *tosama* daimyos, i.e., those who had been rivals of the Tokugawa family before the establishment of the Shogunate, and therefore, were always suspiciously kept outside the intimate circle of the Shogun's government. The power of the daimyos was absolute within their own dominions, but it was entirely in the hands of the Shogun to increase or decrease their possessions through arbitrary assignments of fiefs. Since it was the policy of the Shogun to prevent the daimyos from building up powerful strongholds in any locality, he frequently obliged them to move out of their accustomed dominions and settle in entirely strange districts. Furthermore, he took the precaution of interspersing the *fudai* daimyos among the *tosama* daimyos in order to prevent the latter from conspiracy. The land to the produce of which the daimyos were entitled was cultivated by native peasants. Most peasants cultivated the same land

<sup>1</sup>One *koku* is equal to 5.12 bushels.

from generation to generation, and they felt and acted as if they were the owners of their respective patches of land. Indeed, there existed a common law that the lord could not legally take away from a peasant land which he had cultivated for more than fifteen years (or twenty years in some districts) and on which he had paid taxes regularly.

The peasants of one village, who were the producers of wealth for the ruling class, formed a kind of corporation. A village could act as one person in various legal matters: <sup>1</sup> it could make a contract with another village, it could own property, such as forest and hill, it could sue or be sued as one person, and communal punishment was often incurred. A village was, moreover, a perfect unit of taxation. A whole village was responsible for an assessed amount of taxation so that if one peasant failed to produce his share of the tax, the rest of the village must bear the burden. It was necessary, therefore, to have an organization adapted to the maintenance of the productivity of the whole village.

In order to protect the interest of the community, there was a governing body. At the top, there was the chief of the village, called *Nanushi* or *Shoya*.<sup>2</sup> *Nanushi* meant originally the master of a well cultivated land, as the word denotes. As the most respected man in his community, he was naturally charged by the daimyo to take care of those matters which were of common concern to the villagers. In some villages the office of the *nanushi* was hereditary so that if the *nanushi* died, his heir succeeded him, and if his heir was a minor, one of the lower officers or relatives managed the village affairs until the heir reached the age of maturity.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Kaoru Nakada, "The Personality of a Village in the Tokugawa Period," *The Journal of the Kokka-gaku Kai*, vol. xxxiv, no. viii, pp. 1-35.

<sup>2</sup> The *nanushi* was more commonly used in Kwantō, the eastern Japan, while, the *shoya* was more usual in Kwansei, the western Japan.

<sup>3</sup> Oishi Hisanori, *Jikata Bonrei Roku*, 1794, vol. vii.

In other villages, the villagers were allowed to elect their *nanushi* and to ask the lord to recognize him as their representative.<sup>1</sup> In still other villages, the *nanushi* was appointed by the local official of the lord from among the peasants who were well-to-do and respected by the rest of the villagers.<sup>2</sup> Since the office of *nanushi* was honorary, it was very seldom that they were paid for their services. The chief function of the *nanushi* was to act as an intermediary between the village and the lord. He represented the will of the village to the officer of the lord, and at the same time communicated the order of the lord to the village. Sometimes, therefore, he was placed in a difficult position in trying to satisfy both the lord and his fellow villagers. But in the period when the lord had such overwhelming power over the peasants, who were little better than slaves, the villagers were usually forced into subjection. Within the village, the *nanushi* kept the record of the land and produce of every peasant, and saw that everybody in the village was faithful to his daily task; he kept a registry of births and deaths and various other human affairs; he heard and settled minor complaints of a villager against his neighbor, and consulted the *daikan*, the local officer of the lord, on the greater offenses of villagers.

When a village was so large that the *nanushi* could not look after the entire village, it was divided into two or three groups and each group was supervised by a chief, called *kumigashira* (literally the head of a group). He was either elected by the entire village or chosen by the more important villagers acting in consultation. Since his function was only to keep his own group in order and to assist the *nanushi*, it was not necessary for the village to report to the lord the election of a *kumigashira*.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Oishi Hisanori, *Jikata Bonrei Roku*, 1794, vol. vii.

<sup>2</sup> Komiyama Masahide, *Nosei Zayū*, B.J.A.P., vol. xx, pp. 196-197.

<sup>3</sup> Oishi Hisanori, *op. cit.*, vol. xii.

Besides the larger groups supervised by *kunigashiras*, the whole village was again divided into several companies of five neighboring houses. Each company had a head, called *hyakushodai*, (representatives of peasants). The members of each company were made mutually responsible for their conduct and welfare. If one of them fell sick and was unable to work in his field, the rest had to cultivate it. If one of them failed to raise enough rice to pay his share of tax, the rest had to bear the burden. If one of them was in need of help for building or repairing his house, the rest were expected to offer help. If one of them ran away from the village, the rest had to search for him, and if they failed in the search, they were obliged to pay fines. They must also watch one another to make certain that each one was industrious and observed all the orders of the lord.

Since the *goningumi*, or the company of five, was made responsible in case one of the members failed to pay the tax, it had a considerable voice in the disposition of the land of its individual members. It insisted that each of the members should keep his land at the maximum productivity. Since the result of the cultivation depended greatly upon the head of the house, the company of five even interfered in the succession to headship of the house; and the head of the house usually chose an heir in consultation with his relatives and his company.<sup>1</sup> The distribution of the patrimony also required the approval of the relatives and the company. A man who possessed less than one *chobu*<sup>2</sup> was absolutely prohibited by the lord from portioning off his land; and it was an important duty of the company of five as well as the village officers to prevent the division of land of less than one

<sup>1</sup> Cf *infra*, ch. vii.

<sup>2</sup> One *chobu* is equal to 2.45 acres.



*chobu*.<sup>1</sup> This law was made because so small a plot was likely to be insufficient for the maintenance of a household.

Thus the families were decidedly restricted in their freedom of disposition of land; but as for the management of their patches of land, they were left quite free provided they paid their share of the assessed amount of tax-rice to the lord. In daily work on the field, the family formed a complete team. Both men and women worked equally hard, and they produced all necessities of life with a few exceptions such as salt and medicine. During the Winter, when there was little to do outdoors, they made or repaired the various tools and other articles needed for the coming year's crop, such as rope, straw-mats, and straw-bags. In the early Spring, they began ploughing the field for rice. After the frequent rainfall in midspring, the seedlings of rice were transplanted from the seed-beds to several ponds, or *sui-den* (literally water-fields). In this task it was the custom for the young girls of the village to go into the *sui-den* bare-footed, and arranging themselves in rows to plant the seedlings in regularly plotted rows, which, viewed from a distance, looked like a carpet with green stripes on a brown base. As the plant grew, it demanded every bit of time and energy of the peasants. The warm sun was constantly growing weeds to injure the precious plant so that weeding was an unceasing task for the women and children, while the men struggled to keep the fields well watered and manured. Besides, they had to look after their upland, where they cultivated various other grains and vegetables. In September, when the rice begins to ripen, the task was to keep the birds and beasts out of the fields. There was, moreover, great anxiety about weather. It is just at the season when the rice is ripening that the dreaded typhoon from the northwestern sea visits the Jap-

<sup>1</sup>In some daimiates, the limit was more or less than one *chobu*. "Materials for the Study of Private Law in Old Japan," *Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan*, vol. xx, pt. v, ch. iii.

anese islands. It was, therefore, customary for the peasants to offer prayers on the critical day, which was the two hundred-tenth day after the closing of the winter season. So Japanese peasants sang even today: "May there be no wind on the two hundred-tenth day that the rice may ripen like golden blossoms."

After all the tedious and anxious days came the long-awaited-for harvest, but the harvest was not the last task for the peasant family. After the harvest, the whole family assembled in the front yard of the house, and thrashed and hulled the rice until great piles were ready to be put in straw bags.

While the lord left the village as a self-governing community during the process of production, he was most tyrannical in appropriating the fruit of labor of the peasants. The system of appropriation was most complicated. To the lord, the village existed only as a unit of taxation or tax-producing body, so that the function of the local official of the lord was almost solely the collection of taxes. The local official of the Shogun was called *daikei*, while that of the daimyo was called *gunidan*. Both the *daikei* and the *gunidan* were appointed to supervise several villages, and their duties were about the same, although differing in minor details. The first task of the *daikei* was to investigate the land under his jurisdiction and to grade each piece of land according to its value. In each village, the *daikei* demanded that the village chief, or the *namushi*, and the other officers show him around the cultivated land. The land of every peasant was measured by the attendants of the *daikei* by means of a rope and a bamboo stick. The value of the land was decided upon according to various conditions such as the quality of the soil, distance from residence, accessibility to water, exposure to the sun, freedom from the intrusion of animals, etc. That was deemed first grade land which had fertile soil, was well

exposed to the sun, accessible to water, at a short distance from the residence, and free from injurious animals. Such a piece of land was estimated to produce fifteen *koku* per *chobu*, while a piece of land which lacked one of those qualities was regarded as second grade land, and its produce was estimated at twelve *koku*. The third grade land, which lacked two of the desirable qualities, was estimated to produce nine *koku*. The grading of land was not uniform in every domain, however; for in some domains the first grade was estimated at twelve *koku*, the second at ten, the third at eight *koku*, and so forth.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the spacing between the grades was not necessarily equal so that there might be a difference of one *koku* between the first and second grades, while the difference between the second and the third was three *koku*. Such a method of evaluation could not but be unfair and inaccurate, and much depended upon the discretion of the *daikan*. The *daikan*, who was eager to receive the favor of the Shogun, tried to estimate the land as high as possible, and the rope and the bamboo stick served very well to get the largest estimated area out of every piece of land. The exacting method of land investigation sometimes caused the peasants to hide some pieces of their land, so that those village officers and representatives of the peasants, who showed the *daikan* the way around the village were made to vow before starting that they would show every bit of land. And anyone who was convicted of hiding land was sentenced to die on the cross. When the trip around the village was finished and two copies of the records were made, the *daikan* and his attendants on the one hand and the officers of the village and the peasants on the other hand signed the records, one of which was taken by the *daikan* and the other left with the village chief.

This investigation of land was not carried on every year.

<sup>1</sup> Oishi Hisanori, *Jikata Bonrei Roku*, 1794, vol. ii.

but there was an annual investigation of the produce of rice. When the harvest was near, the village chief surveyed fields and presented a record of the prospect of that year's harvest, and asked for the official investigation of his village. Then the *daikan* with his usual attendants went into every village, and guided as before by the village officers and representative peasants, the attendants reaped the rice of an area of six feet square on every grade of land, and thrashed it and measured the amount of grain. Then the produce of the entire field was estimated by multiplying the measured amount by the multiple of six feet square, which corresponded to the entire area. The *daikan* then inquired about the general condition of the village, such as the productive power of the men and women in the village, the degree of mutual aid, the number of horses and hired laborers, the expenses of the village community, and the economic condition of the peasants in general. After all these investigations were finished, the rate of taxation was decided upon. As a rule, the whole estimated amount of produce was divided in the ratio of two to three. This ratio was called *shikō-rokumun*, that is to say, the lord took four parts of the whole produce while the village was allowed to retain six parts. And individual peasants shared the burden of the taxation according to the produce of their respective pieces of land. If a peasant was too poor to pay, his company of five had to bear the burden, as was mentioned above, and if the company was not able to do so, the whole village had to bear the burden. At any rate, after the assessment had been announced by the *daikan*, the amount had to be carried to the storehouse of the Shogun under all circumstances. In some daimiates, the average production for five or ten years was calculated and forty percent of that amount was regularly taken regardless of the amount of produce in any particular year. There was no exemption nor reduction in the tax unless the produce of the year was less than one third of the average produce.

Besides the assessed amount of tax-rice, the village was obliged to pay about three *sho*<sup>1</sup> per *roku* for the annual expenses of the office of the *daikan*. It was not unusual for the *daikan* to levy much more than the regular amount so that he might fill his own storehouse. If the villagers did not yield to the will of the *daikan*, he would threaten to estimate the year's produce much beyond the actual amount, and there was no escape from the hands of the *daikan*. When the *daikan* and his attendants came to the village to survey the crop, they stayed in peasant's houses and their demand for entertainments was so extravagant that the peasants were forced to go beyond their capacity.

Yet this visit was not the end of trouble, for the peasants were obliged to hull the rice and put it in straw bags, and then carry the load into the granary of the lord, which was sometimes at quite a distance from the village. They were not given even the day's subsistence for the work, unless the distance was more than five *ri*<sup>2</sup> from the village. As the result, the net income of the peasant was bare subsistence. Indeed, it was the policy of the Tokugawa government to govern the peasants in such a way as to let them exist but not to let them have more than they needed to keep themselves alive.<sup>3</sup> The ruler believed that it was not good for the peasants to have any surplus wealth, because since they did not know how to spend it, they would tend to be lazy if they had more than bare subsistence. Thus all the surplus product of the peasants' labor was appropriated by the lord. The peasants could not even afford to make rice the staple diet, for the amount of rice left in the hands of the peasants after the levy of the tax must be used to procure those necessities of life which they could not produce themselves, and their diet,

<sup>1</sup> One *sho* is equal to one hundredth of one *roku*.

<sup>2</sup> One *ri* is equal to 2.44 miles.

<sup>3</sup> Honda Masanobu, *Honsa Roku*, about 1605, B.J.A.P., vol. i, pp. 1-47.

which was a mixture of all cheap grains, grass and roots of all sorts, was beyond the imagination of the upper class people. Yet the peasants worked on and on like human mules, they were intentionally kept illiterate by the lord, who discouraged or in some districts even prohibited, the peasants from reading and writing lest it would lead them to discontent and laziness.

A portion of the rice appropriated by the lord was consumed in the household of the lord as the chief foodstuff and also expended as some part of the wages of the artisans. But the greater part of the tax-rice was expended in paying the stipends of the retainers and attendants of the lord. The stipend of samurais is said to have been determined on the basis of the standard of living of the first grade peasants.<sup>1</sup> A first grade peasant was one who had about thirty-two *koku* of annual income, which was enough to sustain nine persons. There was quite a wide range in the stipends of samurais according to hereditary distinctions or personal merits. Some samurais in a large domain had a stipend of over 10,000 *koku*, but the majority received stipends of less than a hundred *koku*. Many of them received stipends as small as forty or fifty *koku*. There were about 20,000 stipendary samurais of the Shogun, and the total amount of stipend rice was over 550,000 *koku*.<sup>2</sup> Samurais went to the storehouses of their respective lords on two or three prescribed days of the year to receive their stipends.

Japan was at this stage of economic development when metal money began to play a rôle in disintegrating the old order and creating the new order. It will be the task of the following chapters to study out of what circumstances money economy arose, what economic changes were brought about through its penetration, and how it effected the collapse of the social and political institutions of old Japan.

<sup>1</sup> Sohoku Kawase, *Rein Nisei Nin Shi* (Tokyo, 1924), pp. 231-236.

<sup>2</sup> Tsuji Rokuzozayemon, *Joshu*, B J A N, vol. vi, p. 491.

## CHAPTER II

### THE DEVELOPMENT OF MONEY ECONOMY

THE history of metal money in Japan is very vague and lacks sufficient material to give a consistent account. The first mention of copper money is found in a record of the period of Emperor Kenso, in which it was written that in 486 A. D. one *koku* of rice equaled one *mon* of *sen*, copper money, but there are no other records of the same period to give a clear idea of that copper money or the extent of circulation. The next reference to metal money is found in a record of Emperor Temmu, in which it is stated that in 674 A. D. the province of Tsushima produced white silver and presented it to the emperor, but it is not known how and what amount of it was coined. There is evidence, however, that about this period there existed both silver and copper money. In 683, the use of silver money was prohibited, but there is no statement why it was prohibited. Out of such scanty materials, it may be safe to agree with Kōmiyama Masahide that before the eighth century metal money was not yet in general circulation although gold and silver were considered as very precious metals.<sup>1</sup> In 708, the province of Musashi produced a quantity of copper and presented it to Emperor Genmei. The emperor, thereupon, had copper money coined and the name of his era was changed to *Wado*, meaning Japanese copper. In order to spread the circulation of the copper money, the emperor prohibited the private coinage of silver money as well as

<sup>1</sup> Kōmiyama Masahide, *Nosei Zayū*, about 1820, B. J. A. P., vol. xx, p. 296.

the use of it. In 713, he even ordered that copper money should be the medium of exchange in the selling and buying of land,<sup>1</sup> and he endeavored to make the people pay taxes in copper money instead of in various goods. But due to the lack of understanding of the nature of metal money, it did not widely circulate in this period. During this period, gold was not yet used as money, although it was used for ornament. In 749, for instance, the province of Mutsu produced gold and presented it to the emperor, but the emperor used it to adorn an image of Buddha.<sup>2</sup>

Copper money seems to have been coined now and then until the end of the tenth century, but after that the coinage was not ordered by the emperor for nearly six hundred years, or until the end of the sixteenth century. During these six centuries coinage was privately carried on by powerful clans who owned mines in their provinces. In general, gold dust and gold bars were used as money, but since gold dust must be weighed in each transaction and gold bars must be used by cutting off a necessary piece in each transaction, it was most inconvenient. So Japan bought copper money from China with gold bars. The amount of copper money bought from China increased greatly in the Ashikaga period (1336-1465), for this was the period when the people were beginning to appreciate the use of copper money in gradually developing trade and its circulation was being widened. The most acceptable kind of Chinese copper money was called *Eirakusen*, the copper money coined in the Eiraku period in China. The explanation of most historians for the great abundance of *Eirakusen* in Japan during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries is that in August, 1403, a Chinese merchant ship was found shipwrecked off the coast of Misaki in Sagami province, and

<sup>1</sup>Shohoku Wawase, *Ro'o Nisshu Nen Shi* (Tokyo 1924), p. 119.

<sup>2</sup>Daza: Shundai *Keizai Ronu*, 1729. B. J. A. P., vol. 11, pp. 145-146.



on board the ship there was a great quantity of *Eirakusen*. So the Hojos, the lord of that province, took all the money and gave the shipwrecked Chinese fuel and water for the return voyage.<sup>1</sup> Asakawa Zenan doubts the accuracy of this theory on the ground that according to the Chinese history the *Eirakusen* was not coined until eight years after the year when the *Eirakusen* was said to be taken from the shipwrecked Chinese boat.<sup>2</sup> While in some books, the incident of the shipwreck was stated to have happened in 1413 instead of 1403.<sup>3</sup> At any rate, the *Eirakusen* became most prevalent in the eastern provinces of Japan; but since there was another kind of copper money, there were always disputes over the exchange value. So Hojo Ujiyasu prohibited the use of the other kind of copper money in order to make the circulation of the *Eirakusen* easier throughout his dominions of the eight provinces of Kwanto, and even collected taxes in *Eirakusen*. As the result, the other coins were driven into Kwansei, the western part of Japan. Toward the middle of the sixteenth century, various daimyos in Kwanto started to coin a copper money called *Bita*, which could not help being mingled with the *Eirakusen*. At first the two kinds of money were taken as of equal value, but since the *Bita* was of a quality much inferior to that of the *Eirakusen*, there again arose a noisy dispute over the exchange value, so that in 1608 the ratio was finally fixed at one to four.<sup>4</sup>

During the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries, various daimyos coined money out of gold and silver also in order to help the exchange of goods within their respective prov-

<sup>1</sup> Oishi Hisanori, *Jikata Bonrei Roku*, 1794, vol. xi

<sup>2</sup> Asakawa Zenan, *Den-en Jikata Kigen*, about 1838, B.J.A.P., vol. xxi, pp. 394-396.

<sup>3</sup> Makabe Yoshu, *Churi Saron Shu*, B.J.A.P., vol. xiv, p. 197.

<sup>4</sup> Asakawa Zenan, *op cit.*, p. 401.

inces. Toward the end of the sixteenth century, when Toyotomi Hideyoshi had gained supreme power over all other lords and had been appointed *Kwanpaku* (the highest official title conferred by the Mikado), he attempted to unify the system of currency by coining a standard gold coin of two large sizes. The large coins of Toyotomi Hideyoshi, however, were not very popular, since it was the time when each military lord was still forming a complete self-sufficient economy within his own province. Furthermore, the gold coins were so big that the people did not find them useful in daily transactions. A coin of the smaller size was 4 8 *sun* long and 2 8 *sun* wide, and weighed thirty-eight *momme*; while a coin of the larger size was 5 5 *sun* long and 3 5 *sun* wide, and weighed 44 7 *momme*.<sup>1</sup>

In the time of Tokugawa Iyeyasu,—that is, in the beginning of the seventeenth century,—the currency system of Japan had attained some degree of uniformity and universality. This process was facilitated by the timely discovery of gold and silver mines in Sado, Iwami, and Tajima, which began to produce greater amounts after 1601. Iyeyasu caused several kinds of gold and silver coins to be coined besides the two kinds which Toyotomi Hideyoshi had coined. The largest gold coin, which was called *Hankin*, was worth seven *ryo*<sup>2</sup> and two *bu*. the next largest, *Koban*, was worth one *ryo*, or sixty *momme* of silver; and the smallest, *Ichibukin*, was equal to one-quarter of a *ryo* or fifteen *momme* of silver. Besides those gold coins, he coined silver money, such as *Teigin* and *Mameitagin*. About the same time, a quantity of copper money was coined under the auspices of the Shogun, but the *Eirakusen*, the Chinese

<sup>1</sup> One *sun* is equal to 1 19<sup>+</sup> inches. One *momme* is equal to 132<sup>+</sup> ounce.

<sup>2</sup> The value of one *ryo* was about 10.64 *yen* in terms of the present currency. One *yen* is equal to 498 cents at par Yokoi Tokufuyu, *Nippon Shogyo Shi* (Tokyo, 1901), p. 6.

money, was still in circulation. Although the ratio between the *Eirakusen* and the Japanese copper money had been fixed at one to four as mentioned above, there was still much dispute over the exchange value; so Iyeyasu finally prohibited the use of the *Eirakusen* in general transactions, and from that time on, copper money was coined in Japan in ever increasing quantities.

During the early period of the Tokugawa régime, however, metal money<sup>1</sup> was circulated very little among the masses. The common people rarely saw gold coins even in the beginning of the seventeenth century. One day, a group of people were sitting in the waiting room of a local office of a daimyo. One of them was found to have a gold coin with him, and the people became so curious that they all wanted to see it. While the coin was being handed from one to another in great excitement and admiration, it mysteriously disappeared to the perturbation of all present.<sup>1</sup> So rare was gold money in those days. The people were still accustomed to use rice; as for instance, when a peasant wanted to buy a load of herrings for manure, he went to a fisherman and offered a certain amount of rice for a load of herrings. This sort of transaction was still going on at the end of the seventeenth century, as Kumazawa Banzan witnessed.<sup>2</sup> The people also contracted debts and paid interest in terms of rice.<sup>3</sup> For the smaller transactions, they used copper money and rice indiscriminately. In some districts, even as late as the Genroku period (1688-1702), copper coins were so scarce that everything was being bought with rice.<sup>4</sup> But as a rule, however, the peasants had

<sup>1</sup> Ota Nampo, *Ichwa Ichigen*, written between 1800 and 1823, vol. xv, p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Kumazawa Banzan, *Daigaku Wakumon*, B. J. A. P., vol. i, p. 129.

<sup>3</sup> Shoji Koki, *Keizai Mondo Hwoku*, about 1841, B. J. A. P., vol. xxii, p. 225.

<sup>4</sup> Ogyu Sorai, *Seidan*, about 1725, B. J. A. P., vol. iii, p. 412.

enough coins to pay the tax on the fields other than rice-fields in that money. In Kwansei, the western part of Japan, the proportion of the amount of rice to that of metal money in the hands of the people must have been about three to one, for in the early Tokugawa period, in the western domains of the Shogun, one-third of the tax on the entire produce of the fields was levied in silver money. But taxation in terms of metal money was generally discouraged by the political philosophers of the period, who believed that rice alone was the foundation of the state. Within the domains of individual daimyos, there were many variations in the degree of prevalence of metal money. Some daimyos had so much gold and silver that they even paid some of the stipends of their samurais in gold and silver.

The ruling class spent their gold and silver on luxuries, which began to be produced in greater variety and quantity as time went on. But the knowledge of money was still so meagre in those days that the people were more accustomed to measure value in terms of rice than in terms of gold or silver, so that in various accounts of revenues and expenditures, the items in terms of metal money were constantly restated in terms of rice to make the meaning of the accounts clear. Moreover, it was considered against the ethics or etiquette of the samurai to think or talk about money matters. A samurai thought it a disgrace to handle money, and if he was presented with money, he took it as a gross insult. His money account was kept by a low-grade official, and he was proud to show his friends that he did not even know how to count money.

The greatest use of metal money in this period was in the field of foreign trade. In the beginning of the Tokugawa régime, foreign trade was not so severely restricted as in the later period; and not only China but many foreign nations, such as Spain, Portugal, Holland and England.

were eager to trade with Japan. The foreign merchants brought over various luxuries and novelties and found the daimyos—who had gold and silver—to be very good customers. This latter group spent a great deal of money for those imported luxuries. The exact amount of money that went out of the country in this manner is not ascertainable, but Arai Hakuseki asserted that during the sixty years between Keian I and Hōei V (1648-1708) the amount of gold that went out of the country was 2,397,600 *ryo* and the amount of silver money was over 374,229 *kwanme*,<sup>1</sup> while the amount of copper that went out of the country during the forty-four years between Kwambun III and Kwanei IV (1663-1707) was 1,114,498,700 *kin*.<sup>2</sup>

Aroused by the imported luxuries and by the possibility of earning money from the daimyos, who were then the greatest possessors of gold and silver, the artisans began to produce many new modes of things. And the daimyos were lavish in their consumption, so that by the Genroku period (1688-1704) the greater quantity of gold and silver passed from the hands of the daimyos into those of the common people.<sup>3</sup> As the artisans and tradesmen came to appreciate the metal money, they tended to discard the use of rice in business transactions. Most political economists of the day considered this an evil tendency and attempted to maintain

<sup>1</sup> One *kwanme* is equal to a thousand *momme*.

<sup>2</sup> Arai Hakuseki, *Oritaku Shibanoiki*, vols i, ii. One *kin* is equal to 160 *momme*.

<sup>3</sup> "Since it is a natural law that people tend to extravagance than to thrift," writes Umetsuji Kisei, "during just about eighty-two years between the Keicho period and Genroku VIII, nonsensical things were produced year by year, and luxury in clothing, food and dwelling doubled itself month after month, so that the six million *ryo* that had been lying idle in the hands of the samurai class was diminished day by day until by the end of the period most of the money went into the pockets of the merchant class." Umetsuji Kisei, *Yuninwa-no-Ho*, 1843, B J.A.P., vol. XXI, p. 480.

the state of rice economy. But the tendency of the time being inevitable, the legislators were obliged to meet the situation.

In 1696, the Tokugawa government established a bureau for controlling gold and silver foil in order to restrict the use of gold and silver for ornament and increase the amount of gold and silver available for coinage. All gold and silver beaters were required to bring their product to the bureau and to receive the government stamp for a certain fee before they could sell it to their customers, it also required that all gold and silver foil that came into Yedo and Kyoto should pass through the same censorship, and prohibited the buying of gold or silver foil which had no governmental stamp.<sup>1</sup> Two years later the government went a step farther and prohibited the use of gold and silver foil for ornamenting various wares, including toys.<sup>2</sup> Finally in 1705, the government undertook the sale of gold and silver foil in order to stop secret dealings among the public. This enterprise, however, was abandoned four years later, when its futility was realized. Although this policy was such a cherished one that various financially embarrassed statesmen of the Shogunate tried to revive it several times, toward the end of the eighteenth century the policy was openly criticized by the people who believed that the manufacture of luxuries was an essential condition for facilitating the circulation of money. Their argument was that luxuries would induce rich people to spend money which would otherwise lie idle in their hands.<sup>4</sup> As retail trade grew, there was an increasing demand for copper money, and many economists argued against the use of copper for other purposes than money.

<sup>1</sup> *Kōji Rui-en*, vol. iv, pp. 675-676.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 676

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 678

<sup>4</sup> Yamashita Konai, *Jōsho*, about 1788, B.J.A.P., vol. v.

Some of them even advocated the tearing down of big bronze or copper images of Buddha in order to make copper money out of them. In fact some statesmen actually did remove big statues of Buddha and coined money out of them, an act which called forth considerable admiration.

Another method of increasing the amount of currency within the country was found in the prohibition of exportation of money into foreign countries. Owing to the fear of the Jesuit invasion, as early as 1639, the Tokugawa government closed its door to the Portuguese and Spanish traders, but the Chinese and the Dutch continued to enjoy the privilege of free trade until 1685, when the Tokugawa government limited the amount of trade with the Chinese to 6,000 *kwamme* of silver and that with the Dutch to 50,000 *ryo* of gold. Then again in 1688 the government limited the number of Chinese boats to be admitted to the Japanese ports to seventy. As to the Dutch traders, the government gradually reduced the amount of trade until only thirteen vessels were admitted annually and trade amounting to only one hundred and thirty *kwamme* of silver per vessel was allowed in the middle of the eighteenth century.<sup>1</sup>

As metal money permeated the economic life of the people, rice lost its function as a medium of exchange, until by the end of the seventeenth century it was completely disregarded. Consequently the scarcity of metal money began to be felt more and more strongly by the public as well as by the ruling class. Finally in Genroku VIII (1695), the Shogun undertook to debase the currency in order to increase the number of coins. The decree states:

The stamps of the gold and silver coins have grown so indistinct that the Shogun has decreed recoinage. Moreover, the recent output of the mines has not been large and the amount of

<sup>1</sup> Kamizawa Teikan, *Okinagusa*, 1776, vol. vi, p. 25.

gold and silver coins at present in circulation will be decreased gradually. Recoinage has, therefore, been decreed so that the standards of gold and silver may be changed and the amount of currency in circulation may be increased.<sup>1</sup>

Thereupon in 1695 the government minted new coins to the value of 20,000,000 *ryo* of gold and 400,000 *kwamme* of silver out of the gold and silver bars they had kept stored.<sup>2</sup>

The new coins of gold and silver had the same weights as those of the Keicho period, but the difference in the contents were as follows <sup>3</sup>

		<i>gold</i>	<i>silver</i>	<i>alloy</i>
Gold	{ Keicho <i>koban</i> of 1601	85.69	14.25	06
	{ Genroku <i>koban</i> of 1695 . .	56.41	43.19	40
Silver	{ Keicho <i>gin</i> of 1603 .	...	80.00	20.00
	{ Genroku <i>gin</i> of 1695	..	64.00	36.00

In order to bring the new coins into circulation, the government undertook to exchange the old coins for the new at the ratio of 100 *ryo* of the old coins to 101 *ryo* of the new coins, but since the new coin was so debased, as soon as it appeared in the market the old coin began to disappear. The government was accordingly obliged to change the ratio several times until it was finally stated as 100 *ryo* of the Keicho gold to 120 *ryo* of the Genroku gold. And yet the people did not respond to the government's call so that the outcome was not such an increase of currency as had at first been expected. The recoinage, however, proved to be a relief for the Shogunate, which had been in financial distress.<sup>4</sup> Through the debasement of the currency, the government gained about five million *ryo*. It therefore prac-

<sup>1</sup> S. Takimoto, *Nippon Keizai Shu* (5th ed., Tokyo, 1921), pp. 192-193.

<sup>2</sup> Koya Nakamura, *Kokumin Bunka Shu Garon* (2nd ed., Tokyo, 1924), vol. 11, p. 73.

<sup>3</sup> S. Takimoto, *op cit*, p. 194.

<sup>4</sup> *Cf. infra*, ch. viii.



tised this method of relieving financial strain rather freely, and in the period of eighteen years between Genroku VIII and Shotoku II (1695-1712), it recoinced gold twice and silver five times. In these recoinages, silver particularly suffered debasement. In the last recoinage, the silver coin contained only twelve parts of silver to eighty-eight parts of alloy<sup>1</sup>. The frequent recoinage of gold and silver coins caused the exchange ratio between the two coins to fluctuate so much that there was perpetual confusion in the money market, which had a serious effect upon prices.

From this time on, the regulation of the price of rice became another urgent governmental problem. The price of rice did not, of course, depend solely upon the condition of the currency, for even in the earlier period of the Tokugawa régime, the price of rice fluctuated according to the amount of rice available each year. When there was a general dearth, rice became dear, while in a year of plenty it became cheap. Already in this early period the principle was at work that "a high price of rice is advantageous to the samurai class and farmers, and injurious to the artisans and merchants, while a low price of rice is advantageous to the artisans and merchants, and injurious to the samurais and the farmers"<sup>2</sup>. As the fluctuations during this early period were local, they had never caused such widespread disaster as they did in the later period. In the period prior to Genroku VIII (1695), the year of the first recoinage, the average range of fluctuations was about 6.26 *momme* of silver per *roku* (5.12 bushels of rice) and the maximum range was twenty-two *momme*, which occurred between the years Kwanei XIX and XX (1642-1643).<sup>3</sup> But immediately

<sup>1</sup> S. Takimoto, *op. cit.*, p. 199.

<sup>2</sup> Dazai Shundai, *Keizai Roku*, 1729, B.J.A.P., vol. vi, pp. 1 *et seq.*

<sup>3</sup> The calculation is based on Professor Nakamura's table of the price of rice during the Tokugawa period. K. Nakamura, *op. cit.*

after the issue of the Genroku currency, the price of rice jumped to the high figure of 109 *momme*, from 70-80 *momme* per *roku* of the preceding year. After that the price of rice went up and down through a wide range each time the government proclaimed a new ratio of exchange between the old and the new coins, or issued more debased silver coins. The effect of issuing the silver coin called *Yotsubogin* with an impurity of eighty-eight per cent in the period between the February of Shotoku I (1711) and the September of the following year was stupendous. The price of rice jumped from 81.5-90 *momme* in Shotoku II to 155 *momme*, 201 8 *momme* and 230 *momme* per *roku* in the following three years respectively.<sup>1</sup> Such an extraordinary condition as this could not but cause general unrest among the town population, who now bought their food with money. Consequently there arose a clamorous demand for currency reform. The government and the ruling class, who had been enjoying the profit from debasing the currency, came to feel that there was nothing more to be gained from that policy. The Shogun, therefore, adopted the argument of Arai Hakuseki that in order to lower the prices it was most urgent to reduce the amount of currency in circulation and to improve the content of money.<sup>2</sup> The new currency reform was accordingly carried out in the period between Shotoku V (1715) and Kyoho II (1717). The result was to reduce the amount of currency to one-quarter of the previous amount and to bring the intrinsic value of money back to that of the Keicho currency.

The reform, however, brought about too great a fall in the price of rice. The price of rice, which was about 230 *momme* of silver per *roku* in Shotoku V (1715) came down to 130-150 *momme* in Kyoho II (1717), and in the fol-

<sup>1</sup> K. Nakamura, *op. cit.*, p. 82

<sup>2</sup> Arai Hakuseki, *Oritaku Shiba no Ki*, about 1717, vol. ii.

lowing year way down to 33 *momme*<sup>1</sup> This phenomenon, which looked like a blessing at first sight, became a cause of distress for all classes of people. Dazai Shundai wrote in Kyoho XIV (1729), describing the distressing condition of those days:

People look down upon rice like dirt. Even if a samurai wants to sell the surplus of his rice stipend in order to buy other things, he cannot get enough money to buy even the sheer necessities of life. If he wants to buy anything extra, he must sell more rice, and then he does not have enough to eat. Thus the samurai's distress has become terrible. The farmer is in the same dilemma.<sup>2</sup> Even if he has a good harvest, he cannot sell his produce for sufficiently high prices to cover the expense of labor and transportation, and therefore, he is obliged to use just that amount of rice which can be consumed by his family, but he cannot gain any profit out of the surplus. When the samurai class is poor and has little purchasing power, the gain of traders and artisans is small. Consequently in spite of the fact that rice is as cheap as soil, there are many poor people who are half starved.<sup>3</sup>

Here again, the government had to face a most difficult situation. The economic strength of the samurai class began to show signs of decline, and the peasants were beginning to stir against the exacting lord. Hence the government attempted to remedy the situation by raising the price of rice. This time they did not try to solve the problem through currency reform, but through a reduction of the amount of rice in the market. During the years between

<sup>1</sup> K. Nakamura, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

<sup>2</sup> Cf., "A good harvest is a tragedy. Peasants put their produce upon oxen and horses and go into town to sell it. But alas, they return to the village only with a small handful of money!" Kamizawa Teikan, *op. cit.*, p. 71

<sup>3</sup> Dazai Shundai, *Keizai Roku*, 1729, B.J.A.P., vol. vi, p. 119.

Kyoho XIV and XVII (1729-1732), the government issued many decrees, such as ordering the citizens of Yedo and Osaka to buy rice in great quantities and store it up, encouraging the manufacture of *sake* (liquor) and granting a monopoly right to guilds of rice merchants. In spite of such legislation, the price did not show any upward movement. In Kyoho XVII (1732), however, the power of nature prevailed over that of man. There appeared in the Summer of Kyoho XVII (1732) an army of injurious insects, which ate up tens of thousands of *koku* of ripening rice in one night. The damage was enormous, spreading over the entire area of Kyushu, Chugoku, Shikoku, and even to Kinai.<sup>1</sup> This natural calamity produced at once the result for which the government had been struggling in vain. The result was, however, more than the government and the people had wished, because the price of rice now jumped suddenly to 130-150 *momme* of silver for one *koku*, which meant starvation to the poor, who had been accustomed to such low prices as thirty, forty or fifty *momme*. The Tokugawa government now hastened to undo all the previous legislation for price regulation and gave out the stored rice to the poor, while it forced the monopolizing merchants to sell out their stock at a low price. Such a jump in price was only temporary, however. In the following year, the price went back to the former low level, and the government resumed its policy of price raising, which resulted in the fixing of the minimum price of the better grade rice at forty-two *momme* for one *koku*.<sup>2</sup> About this time, the public was aroused to the fact that the low price of rice was due to the decrease in the amount of money in circulation, and therefore that it was necessary to increase the number of coins in order to save the situation, as dis-

<sup>1</sup>Kamizawa Teikan, *op. cit.*, vol. v, p. 151.

<sup>2</sup>K. Nakamura, *op. cit.*, p. 224

cussed by Ogyu Sorai in his *Seidan* (*Discourse on Political Economy*). Thus a currency reform was again carried out in Genbun I (1736), and as a result of debased coinage, the money market was once more inflated. This was a great source of embarrassment to the merchants, because the presence of so many kinds of currency, all at different ratios of exchange, made their transactions more and more complicated. But the debasement of the currency seemed to relieve the financial distress of the ruling class and the policy was carried out in Meiwa II (1765) and Anei I (1772), and in several other later times. The consequence was a fearful confusion in the money market.

The exchange ratios for different kinds of currency changed almost every day; and it was the money-changers who did a thriving business in the midst of this chaos. At first, anybody could engage in the money-changing business, and it was the custom of the money-changers to fix the ratio of exchange quite arbitrarily. But unfairness in this practice led the Shogun to decree in September, 1711, that it was illegal for the money-changers to combine to raise the charge for money changing.<sup>1</sup> Three years later, the government again decreed that those guilty of taking unfair profits from money changing should be severely punished and that the one who reported the guilty money-changer should be rewarded with the property of the latter.<sup>2</sup> Even these repeated decrees were not obeyed, however, and there were constant complaints against the money-changers, so that in 1718 it was proclaimed that only licensed money-changers should be allowed to conduct the business. There were formed twenty-seven groups out of about six hundred and fifty licensed money-changers. These groups gathered together every night at the Yokkaichi Square and fixed the

<sup>1</sup> *Koji Rui-en*, vol. ix, pp 468-469.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p. 465

rates of exchange for the following day.<sup>1</sup> This did not reduce the evil practices in the least, because now that the guilds of money-changers had more control in the business, they were able to raise charges. The charge for exchange was formerly twenty *mon*<sup>2</sup> of copper money per *ryo*, but in the middle of the eighteenth century it was raised to a hundred *mon* per *ryo*.<sup>3</sup> Finally the cry against the guild became so loud that in 1842 the government abolished it together with various other guilds, which had been gaining too much control in the business world, but this abolition of the guilds produced such terrific confusion in the market that the government was obliged to reinstitute the guilds only nine years later in 1851.<sup>4</sup>

The degree of penetration of money economy may be seen also in the increasing number of cases brought before the feudal courts of justice. The magistrates of the different courts, who had been accustomed to handle matters concerning tax-rice, disputes over rice-fields, etc., were now surrounded by those who came clamoring for action on pecuniary cases. We find most entertaining records of magistrates in various districts exchanging consultation letters among themselves concerning money cases for which there was no precedent. They were lost in the new economic environment. The courts urged the private settlement of pecuniary matters on the ground that

money loans owe their origin to the integrity and mutual fidel-

<sup>1</sup> *Koji Rui-en*, vol. ix, pp. 472-473.

<sup>2</sup> *Mon* was the unit of the copper money in the Tokugawa period. In 1636, the ratio of exchange between the copper money and the gold money was fixed as 4,000 *mon* of copper to one *ryo* of gold. But the ratio changed from time to time in the money market. K. Nakamura, *op. cit.*, pp. 69-70.

<sup>3</sup> Kamizawa Teikan, *op. cit.*, vol. xiv, p. 144.

<sup>4</sup> *Koji Rui-en*, vol. ix, pp. 470-480.

ity of the parties, and if they continue in the exercise of those virtues, all such transactions can be privately settled without difficulty and the aid of the public officials need not be sought. These truths are beyond doubt. Actions upon such claims must necessarily mean lack of virtue in the parties. The recent increase of such suits is due to the absence of generosity and gratitude among lenders and borrowers. The manners of the present are deplorable and show that morality is declining.<sup>1</sup>

In hundreds of cases, especially the suits of merchants against their samurai debtors,<sup>2</sup> the courts refused to give decisions. Yet there were so many cases that came up to the courts every day that the government was obliged to establish "money-action months". One of the decrees establishing these months in April and November contains the following statement:

Money actions before us have recently increased to such an extent that if we are to try all of them as we do now, the Court days of the Chamber (the 4th and 21st of every month) will be occupied with those cases exclusively, and no other cases be heard; moreover, as a result of this, the morals of the Chamber may degenerate.<sup>3</sup>

But two months a year were entirely inadequate for the ever-increasing appeals for money actions, so that about the middle of the nineteenth century "money action days" were established by a law, of which the following is an excerpt:

As there are no regular money action days at the deputy's office, the parties will be appearing whenever they please, some demanding a summons, others wishing to pay. It will therefore

<sup>1</sup> "Materials for the Study of Private Law in Old Japan," *Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan*, vol. xx, suppl. pt. iii, pp. 377-378

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *infra*, ch. v.

<sup>3</sup> "Materials for the Study of Private Law in Old Japan," *op. cit.*, p. 113.

be best to persuade a compromise in all cases where it is possible. For cases where it is not, days should be appointed on which the actions may be tried.<sup>1</sup>

On those days, then, the people came with complaints, suits and disputes. Women even brought suits against men who had borrowed money from them. A man sued his relative who had cheated him out of his business funds. Another came to appeal for a summons for a man who refused to pay the debt of his deceased father. Many came clamoring for settlements of money loans, which they had made to inhabitants of other fiefs. Others came to complain of the usurious rates of interest of money lenders. Pressed by all these cases, the various courts passed many heterogeneous laws. The court of Osaka passed a severe bankruptcy law stating that

all family belongings, (with the exception of articles serving the personal use of the wife and children), house, residence land, rice-fields, upland, etc. are to be subject to execution: and that if the bankrupt is a dependent in the household of another, the clothes and other movables of the debtor alone are to be taken on execution.<sup>2</sup>

The same court decided upon the minimum amount of claims for which actions may be brought on pledges, credit sales, money loans and croppings, as sixty *momme* or more in silver, one *ryo* or more in gold, or five *kwammon* or more in copper in actions by townspeople against villagers; and as ten *momme* or more in silver, one *bu*<sup>3</sup> or more in gold, one *kwammon* or more in copper in actions in which

<sup>1</sup> "Materials for the Study of Private Law in Old Japan," *op cit*, p. 370

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p. 209

<sup>3</sup> One *kwammon* is equal to a thousand *mon*. Cf. *infra*, footnote, 39

<sup>4</sup> One *bu* is one quarter of one *ryo*



both parties were villagers.<sup>1</sup> This difference in the minimum amounts in the two cases was justified on the ground that ten *momme* to a villager was just as significant as sixty *momme* to a townsman, for the latter was so much richer than the former. The court in Yedo once reduced arbitrarily the rate of interest from one *bu* per *ryo* to one *bu* per twenty *ryo*.<sup>2</sup> At another time, the rate was fixed at one *bu* per twenty-five *ryo* with a prohibition of sundry charges, which had the effect of exacting a higher rate under disguise, and the decree ended with the following preaching:

The fixing of the above rate of interest on money loans is not to be looked upon as a cause of loss to money lenders; it rather tends to their peace of mind. Moneyed persons ought to lend their money for the benefit of society; borrowers are not to be so reprehensible as to fail to pay what they owe. Lenders should sue for their money only when it cannot be helped, showing uprightness and sincerity in all their dealings.<sup>3</sup>

In Yenkyo III, 3 (May, 1746), the Chamber of Decisions issued a resolution that

for those claims occurring during and since Yenkyo I, the court shall issue a summons for the 4th and 21st days of the month and order payments within a thirty days term. If any arrear, however small, remains at its expiration a payment by bi-monthly instalments shall be ordered. If the debtor is still in default, an order of execution in bankruptcy shall be issued. If a debtor fails to appear on summons or is in (wilful) default after being ordered to pay, he shall, if one of the military gentry [the samurai class] be reported to the Council of State, or if of the priesthood, farmers or townspeople, be punished.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Materials for the Study of Private Law in Old Japan," *op. cit.*, p. 210.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 301.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 302-303.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10.

Such a proclamation was certainly a gospel to money lenders. After that, suits on money loans became so cumbersome that in October, 1797, the Council of State was obliged to instruct the magistrates not to take up claims on money loans already existing but to take up and try "only those actions for money loans, unpaid purchase money, servants' wages, etc., which are brought on claims arising" thereafter<sup>1</sup>. In the following month the Chamber passed a resolution to that effect. This resolution thus brought relief to debtors, who thereupon acted quite unconscionably. The consequence was complaints from creditors, who perpetually annoyed the magistrates.

However annoying this may have been to the magistrates, and however disagreeable the penetration of money economy may have been to the moral leaders of the period, money economy had securely taken its root in Japan by the end of the Genroku period, i. e., by the beginning of the eighteenth century; rice and metal money had completely changed their positions. Metal money had become the pivot of the economic life of Japan and it became impossible to live without it, no matter how great an amount of rice one might have in his storehouse. Thus the feudal institutions based upon rice economy were gradually undermined by the new forces brought into action by money and in the course of time new institutions were created to take the place of the old.

<sup>1</sup> "Materials for the Study of Private Law in Old Japan," *op. cit.*, pp. 377-378

## CHAPTER III

### THE EFFECT OF MONEY UPON THE DEVELOPMENT OF TOWNS

UP to the seventeenth century, Japan was divided among a great number of powerful families, who were ruling in their respective feudal domains. Since this was the age when the feudal lords were fighting for supremacy against one another, military power was of paramount importance to these lords. A feudal lord was quite ready to take advantage of a weaker lord, while at the same time he had to be prepared to defend his dominion against the invasion of a stronger lord. Hence he built his castle on a strategic point, such as a rocky hilltop or the bottom of a protected valley, and the needs of such a castle town were supplied by the surrounding villages, which were under his control. During those days, it was dangerous to facilitate communication, as it would give advantages to the invading enemies; ~~therefore~~, each lord kept the highways as inconvenient as possible. Consequently, there were very few inland towns for trading purposes. Only a few seaports were somewhat developed for trading with China and a few other foreign countries. Within the dominion of each lord, the castle town and villages constituted an independent self-sufficient economy with free intercommunication between them. There were over two hundred and sixty such castle towns in the beginning of the seventeenth century. These towns were prosperous, especially Kamakura, Odawara, Sakae, Osaka and Kyoto, which had been controlled by such powerful lords as Ashikaga, Hojo and Toyotomi. But the activ-

ities of these towns did not, as a rule, go farther than the dominions of their respective lords. The most important concern of the town was still the problem of defense. The lord calculated the amount of provisions in his storehouse from the standpoint of whether they were sufficient to feed his warriors and townspeople in case the castle should be besieged. The townspeople were satisfied to make their wares simply in order to exchange them for rice, which the villagers brought after harvest.

During the first half of the seventeenth century, the political genius of Tokugawa Iyeyasu and the concentration policy of his successors finally put an end to the independence of the feudal lords, and they were all made vassals or daimyos of the Tokugawa Shogun. They were required to keep their wives and children in Yedo, which was the headquarters of the Tokugawas, while they themselves were required to reside in Yedo every other year. Since the Shogun now had absolute control over the dominions of the daimyos, he often interchanged arbitrarily the original dominions of various lords or conferred upon them several fiefs which were widely separated from one another. This policy was followed for the purpose of weakening the strongholds of the daimyos so as to strengthen the central power of the Tokugawa régime. The purpose was attained, for over the long period of two hundred and fifty years there was not one lord who rose up against the Shogunate, and Japan enjoyed peace that had never been known before.

This peaceful era afforded the masses of people opportunities to pursue their occupations undisturbed by the constant warfare, which had been customary for several centuries in the past. In addition to Yedo, the more important towns, such as Kyoto, Osaka, Nagasaki, Urawa and Sakae, were now held under the direct jurisdiction of the Shogun. The intercourse between these towns became closer and closer, and they came to be actual commercial towns.

The towns grew both in area and population. The most striking development was that of Yedo. Yedo was originally the castle town of Ota Dokan, but it witnessed the rise and fall of several military lords in the castle until Tensho XVIII (1590), when the castle was given to Tokugawa Iyeyasu by Toyotomi Hideyoshi, who was the supreme lord at the time. When Iyeyasu entered the castle in the August of Tensho XVIII, Yedo was a pitiful sight. Surrounding the castle extended an apparently limitless wilderness with smoke rising here and there from the chimneys of very widely scattered cottages; but within the following fifty years of the Tokugawa administration, Yedo became a great center. In order to meet the demands of the families of the daimyos, who were now required to reside in Yedo, and their thousands of retainers and attendants, supplies came pouring in from all parts of Japan, and the country folk began to find a profitable outlet for their products. Traders and artisans poured into the city, and year by year new houses were added in rapid succession. Already in Kyoho VIII (1723), the population of Yedo, excluding the samurai class, was 526,317, and about the same time there were 1,672 streets.<sup>1</sup> Sixty-four years later, in Tenmei VII, the population had increased to 2,285,300 and the number of streets to 2,772;<sup>2</sup> but these are only census figures, the actual population was probably much greater than that given in the census.<sup>3</sup> As the demand for houses grew, their

<sup>1</sup> S. Fujioka and H. Hirada, *Nippon Fusoku Shi* (Tokyo, 1918), vol. 11, p. 86.

<sup>2</sup> Ota Nampo, *Ichiuwa Ichugen* (1800-1823), vol. viii, p. 12, vol xxxvi, p. 10

<sup>3</sup> "Population census in Yedo every year counts only the number of houses and accepts the number of inmates as given by individuals; therefore, no exact investigation exists and there are about as many outside the census as inside" Asakawa Zenan, *Seiji Shichisaku*, about 1830, B J.A.P., vol. xxi, p. 464

prices soared until some of the houses on the main street, because of their commercial advantages, were worth a thousand *ryo* per one *ken*, or six feet, frontage. Merchants were eager to buy such houses because it was possible for them to do a business of a thousand *ryo* a day<sup>1</sup>. The renting of houses became quite common too. In Tenmei VI (1786) there were over 208,000 houses, while there were only 19,308 who owned their own houses<sup>2</sup>.

The spectacular growth of Yedo was a great stimulus to the other commercial towns, especially Osaka. Already by the end of the Muromachi period, i. e., after the middle of the fifteenth century, Osaka was a prosperous town owing to its advantageous situation for carrying on commerce both by land and water; but after the establishment of the Toyotomi régime (1578-1600) Osaka became the greatest exporting city of Japan. The products of the nearby provinces were easily shipped from the port of Osaka, and even the distant provinces sought to market their products there. Osaka became "the kitchen of the Japanese Empire," and as early as Kwambun V (1665) there were five hundred and forty-nine streets and the population was 268,760<sup>3</sup>.

As commerce between different cities grew, the need for means of transportation became greater. But the Shogun, who was still suspicious of various daimyos, followed the policy of keeping rivers and mountains as natural defenses and would not allow the building of bridges and highways. There were, to be sure, some public roads like Tokaido, which transversed the distance between Kyoto and Yedo, but even such highways were cut by rivers, which had to be forded or crossed by ferry. Besides, the Shogun kept his officials at all important points on the highways in order to

<sup>1</sup> Kamizawa Teikan, *Okunagusa*, 1776, vol. xiii, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Ota Nampo, *op. cit.*, vol. vii, p. 13.

<sup>3</sup> Fujioka and Hirade, *op. cit.*, p. 92.

examine the passports of all the travellers. There were no other means for travelling than horseback and *kago*, or palanquin. The men who carried the *kago* or attended the horses were called *kumosuke*, men of clouds, as they wandered over the mountains like clouds. At the river crossing, there were men who carried travellers across the river either on their shoulders or on litters. Sometimes, they charged such exorbitant fares that travellers were obliged to pay out the last *mon* in their pockets. And in addition to the inconveniences in travelling, there was the danger of highwaymen who, lying in wait in desolate spots along the highways, pillaged the travellers ruthlessly. As commerce grew, the people began to feel the great necessity of good transportation, and many advanced writers on political economy urged the bridging of the rivers that traversed the important highways between Yedo and Osaka. The Tokugawa government, however, obstinately maintained its original policy throughout its régime, an attitude which impeded the economic development of Japan to a considerable degree.

The only possibility of transportation during this period was, therefore, by water routes. But since there was very little knowledge of navigation, the boats, the largest of which could contain a thousand *koku* of rice, sailed only a short distance off the coast so that they might not lose sight of the familiar land marks. Already in 1619, some merchants were keen enough to see the great possibilities of prosperous business in marine transportation, and they organized a guild of the merchant marine, called Hishigaki Kaisen Donya. They were engaged in carrying such articles as wine, vinegar, bean-sauce, lacquer wares, paper, cotton goods, hardwares, straw mats, etc., from Osaka to Yedo.<sup>1</sup> Presently, another guild was organized, called Tarusen, which began to compete with the Hishigaki. In 1772,

<sup>1</sup> *Koji Rui-en*, vol. viii, pp. 451-452.

the Taru-sen received a charter from the Shogun to monopolize the transportation of liquors, and they paid the Shogun as "thank-money" ten sheets of silver annually. In the following year, however, the Hishigaki also asked for the grant of a charter to monopolize the transportation of all other goods than the seven principal articles, which it had been agreed should be shipped on the boats of both companies. The Hishigaki, moreover, specialized in transporting the merchandise of the "Twenty-Four Guilds" of Osaka to the "Ten Guilds" of Yedo, between which there was a thriving business. But since the Taru-sen operated their boats faster than the Hishigaki and offered many other conveniences to the shippers, even those goods over which the Hishigaki had the monopoly right of transportation tended to be smuggled into the Taru-sen. Those merchants in Yedo who were outside of the Ten Guilds especially found it more advantageous to have their goods shipped from Osaka by the Taru-sen. Thus the Ten Guilds, whose interest was identified with the Hishigaki, were threatened with the competition of the outside merchants, and they appealed to the Shogun to prohibit such illegal shipping by the Taru-sen. The Shogun, who was then financially distressed, granted the appeal when he was offered thank-money from each member of the Ten Guilds.<sup>1</sup> With the support of the Shogun, the Hishigaki began to apply many unfair practices in their business, but the Shogun tempted by the 12,000 *ryo* of annual thank-money let it alone for some time. Prior to this, as early as the end of the eighteenth century, advanced political economists, such as Honda Rimei and Hanyu Kumagoro, began to argue that marine transportation should not be left in the hands of private individuals, who cared for nothing but profits; because it would produce serious effects not only upon prices but upon the

<sup>1</sup> *Koji Rui-en*, vol. viii, p. 449.



very existence of town inhabitants, who had come to depend upon the provisions imported from various parts of the country. "The amount of rice consumed every day in Yedo is more than ninety thousand *koku*, and the consumption per month is, therefore, over 2,700,000 *koku*," argued Honda Rimei. "Even if we import rice by 1,000 *koku* vessels, we must have ninety vessels coming in every day in order to feed the entire population of Yedo. Since there is no government vessel, the transportation of food supplies will have to depend on the vessels of merchants. It is the height of danger to let the entire population, both high and low, depend on the caprice of merchants."<sup>1</sup> Influenced by such arguments and by the general commotion against the profiteering merchant marines, the government finally issued a decree in Tempō XII (1841) withdrawing the charters of the merchant marines and declaring that everybody should be free from that time on to ship their merchandise on any boat. As the result, cut-throat competition was resumed; and finally the Hishigaki was overwhelmed by the Taru-sen, which now came to have a practical monopoly in the transportation business. In July, 1845, however, the Taru-sen incurred a great deal of loss on account of a number of shipwrecks, which disorganized the transportation between Yedo and Osaka to such a great extent that nine members of the Twenty-Four Guilds of Osaka seized the opportunity for reviving the Hishigaki.

The townspeople who were eager to promote the facility of transportation were no longer the artisans and traders of the olden times, who produced and sold their goods simply in order to meet the demands of the ruling class and to receive rice from the farmers in exchange for their manufactured goods; there were few such goods, however,—for the farmers satisfied most of their wants

<sup>1</sup>Honda Rimei, *Keisei Hisaku*, 1789-1800, B.J.A.P., vol. xii, p. 77.

themselves. When metal money was scarce and a greater part of their work had to be paid in rice, the artisans worked just hard enough to keep their families alive. For there was a limit to the amount of rice they could consume, and moreover, rice, which was bulky and perishable, could not be stored and accumulated forever. But now that the artisans earned money incomes and had learned that money was much more convenient for accumulation and for the satisfaction of their wants, the townspeople engaged in their business for money profits; they no longer waited for the demands of their customers, they created demands by producing novel and curious things, which appealed to the public. The artisans who used to make their goods to the order of customers familiar to them began to find a market for their goods among strangers, who were rapidly filling the town; and there were many new artisans and traders who became their rivals. Before long, the artisans and traders in towns found that it was necessary for them to form an association for mutual protection and avoidance of competition. Hence the appearance of guilds.

In the beginning of the Tokugawa period, there was not yet any clear distinction between artisans and merchants, between wholesale and retail dealers; everyone who produced articles sold them directly to his customers. When money became the general medium of exchange and facilitated the exchange of commodities, specialization in certain phases of business activities became possible. As the result there came into existence a clear-cut distinction between the artisan and the merchant in certain kinds of goods. Even artisans were divided into various groups according to their crafts, while merchants were divided likewise according to the commodities in which they dealt. In the beginning of the eighteenth century, craft guilds of all sorts were being organized, some of which were minutely differentiated. In

the building trade, for instance, we find separate guilds for carpenters, sawyers, painters, plumbers, roof-thatchers, brick-layers, plasterers, masons and mat-layers; guilds which carefully guarded their own interests against one another.<sup>1</sup> Among the merchants, wholesalers and middlemen were organizing guilds. *Tonya* was the general name for the wholesaler; it was applied both to one individual wholesaler and to a group of wholesalers. In 1813, there were in Yedo alone sixty-two *tonya*, the smallest consisting of one wholesaler, while the largest consisted of one hundred and thirteen wholesalers.<sup>2</sup>

In Yedo, the most powerful guild of wholesalers was that of the ten *tonyas*, called Tokumi Donya (The Ten Guilds), which consisted of the Kagishi-gumi, the Watamise-gumi, the Omotemise-gumi, the Nurimono-gumi, the Kugimise-gumi, the Torimachi-gumi, the Uchimise-gumi, the Yakushuten-gumi, the Kamimise-gumi and the Sakemise-gumi. The details of the organization are as follows:<sup>3</sup>

The Kagishi-gumi composed of 22 wholesalers of oil				
The Watamise-gumi	"	"	4	" cotton
The Omotemise-gumi	"	"	12	" straw-mats
The Nurimono-gumi	"	"	12	" lacquer wares
The Torimachi-gumi	"	"	16	" dry goods
The Kugimise-gumi	"	"	14	" hardware
The Uchimise-gumi	"	"	unknown no.	" clothing
The Yakushuten-gumi	"	"	25	" medicines
The Kamimise-gumi	"	"	9	" paper
The Sakemise-gumi	"	"	45	" sake (liquor)

The Tokumi Donya was organized in 1694 in order mutually to insure the members against the loss incurred in the transportation of their commodities from Osaka, but as time

<sup>1</sup> *Koji Rui-en*, vol. iii, pp. 490-491.

<sup>2</sup> Ota Nampo, *op cit.*, vol. xxxii, pp. 23-26.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 22-23.

*Koji Rui-en*, vol. viii, pp. 437-441.

went on, there appeared many business men outside this association who threatened to supersede the Tokumi Donya. The Tokumi Donya thereupon appealed to the Shogun in Kyowa III (1803) to order these outside business men to join them, and the appeal was granted. Thus the original association was greatly increased in number. The total number of *kumi*, or groups of wholesalers, was thirty-five in the Bunka period (1804-1817); but the name of the association was still unchanged and it was called the Tokumi Donya, the association of ten *kumi*. There was a similar organization in Osaka, composed of twenty-four *kumi*, and these two associations remained the most prominent factors in the commercial world throughout the latter part of the Tokugawa period.

The guilds of wholesalers and middlemen received charters from the Shogun, which afforded them various privileges in conducting their business. At first, it was not the policy of the guild to restrict the number of people engaged in the same trade. The main purpose was the regulation of trade practices so that before the Kyoho period (1716-1735) it was usually the case that the guild appealed to the Shogun for the enforcement of compulsory membership. After the Kyoho period, as the number of new members increased rapidly, the guilds became alarmed; some of them succeeded in getting charters authorizing them to limit their membership. Another reason for obtaining charters was the clear demarcation of trade areas and spheres of business activities. The development of cities and the consequent growth of exchange gradually broke down the self-sufficient economy of provinces and enabled each province to specialize in one or two main products. Yamakata Hoshu described the situation in 1820:

At the present time, there are provinces that abound in rice, others in grains, others in cloth, and still others in paper and

timber, and so forth. Thus most provinces have come to produce one or two kinds of goods in large quantities and do not make other things themselves; they send out their products into the cities and exchange them for other products they need.<sup>1</sup>

Each guild of wholesalers, therefore, had its special region from which the bulk of the merchandise came; as for instance, the textile dealers looked for cotton crepe in Yechigo and for silk in Kyoto, while the timber dealers drew their merchandise principally from Owari and Kii. The guild of wholesalers in any commodity thus had a direct connection with the provinces which produced that commodity. The agents of the guild made periodical visits to these provinces and gave the orders of the town-traders. If there was a rush order, the wholesaler might write to the producer, specifying the quality and quantity of the goods. His letter was carried by a runner, called *hikyaku*, or "flying feet", because he crossed a great stretch of territory in a remarkably short time. Since the source of a commodity was limited, each guild endeavored to exclude outsiders from the source, and for this purpose the guild sought to secure a charter from the Shogun. Craft guilds also sought clear demarcations in their respective spheres of trade. Competition among the various groups in the same industry was marked especially in the building trades, where the line of demarcation between two closely related trades was very apt to be overstepped. As for instance, in Bunka XI (1826) the sawyers' guild in Yedo petitioned the government, because the carpenters were depriving them of their trade by sawing timber themselves.<sup>2</sup>

Of course, the government did not grant those charters and privileges gratuitously. Each guild or wholesaler who asked for a charter offered the Shogun what was called

<sup>1</sup> Yamakata Hoshu, *Yumenoshiro*, 1820, B.J.A.P., vol. xxv, p. 320.

<sup>2</sup> *Koji Rui-en*, vol. iv, p. 536.

*unjo* or thank-money. The guild of wholesalers in Japanese silk, for instance, paid annually thirty *kwamme*<sup>1</sup> of silver; each of the twenty-seven members of the turners' guild paid annually a hundred and sixty-two *momme* of silver. Each member of the cutlers' guild for each knife he sold paid three *mon* of copper into the common treasury of the guild, out of which they paid thirty *ryo* of thank-money to the Shogun. The guild of forty-four wholesalers of cotton, which was one of the Tokumi Donya, paid one thousand *ryo* per year. The vegetable guild of Tenman paid forty *kwamme* of silver for the first year of the grant of the charter and twenty *kwamme* annually thereafter. A guild of fish-mongers paid 1,500 *momme* of silver, and so forth. Thank-money was the source of great gain to the Shogun; consequently, he was disposed to grant privileges to those guilds which offered the most substantial backing in support of their requests. Each guild was, therefore, constantly watching and guarding against the appearance of a rival guild which might offer more thank-money and thereby make the charter of the former useless and void.

The guild checked the invasion of outsiders by the authority of its charter, at the same time regulating trade practices within itself. As was mentioned above, before the Kyoho period (1716-1735) membership was not limited, so that anybody who paid the entrance fee to the guild and received the license from the government could be engaged in the business, and the government took care that the guild should not exclude new comers by demanding high entrance fees and other dues. Usually the entrance fees included *sake* (liquor) with which the old members feasted to welcome the new member, and different amounts of fees were required according to the kinds of applicants. For instance, the entrance fee of a stranger into a book-sellers' guild in

<sup>1</sup> One *kwamme* is equal to one thousand *momme*

Yedo was two sheets of silver and five *sho*<sup>1</sup> of *sake*, while that of an old servant of a member of the guild was one *bu* of gold and three *sho* of *sake*, and that of a son or brother of a member was one sheet of silver and two *sho* of *sake*.<sup>2</sup> After the Kyoho period, the overcrowding of some of the guilds tended to reduce the share of business of each member and led to the restriction of membership. New members were then admitted only when there were vacancies.

The members of a guild elected one or more officers from among themselves to look after general matters, such as collecting dues, taking thank-money to the government office, keeping records, etc. In some guilds, the members took turns in holding office. The usual term of office was one year. A meeting of all the members was called now and then to discuss matters of common concern, such as questions of output, prices, working hours and employes. A cutlers' guild which specialized in knives for cutting tobacco leaves, for instance, agreed not to do any work whatsoever on the holidays prescribed by the guild, and also limited the number of knives to be produced in a day to twenty-one for the largest knife, twenty-seven for the medium-sized and thirty for the smallest.<sup>3</sup> The publishers' guild in Yedo, which was organized in 1698, was more concerned in preventing duplication of publication<sup>4</sup>. Especially among craft guilds, it was customary for no artisan to be allowed to employ a new man or take in an apprentice without announcing it to all the other members of the guild; and each member of the guild was expected to bar those apprentices who had left their original master in the same trade before the term of their contract had expired. The terms of con-

<sup>1</sup> One *sho* is equal to 19 quarts.

<sup>2</sup> *Koji-Rui-en*, vol. viii, p. 415

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. iv, pp. 628-629.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, vol viii, p. 414.

tract for apprenticeship varied, but generally did not exceed ten years. After having served his master for the term of contract, an apprentice usually offered him a few years of voluntary service in order to show his appreciation of the kind instruction of the master. Then he was established as a full member of the guild; but when the number of members in the guild was limited, he could not become a full member, but could only conduct a branch of his master's establishment.

With the protection of the government and strict regulations within the guilds, it was only natural that the guilds should become very powerful controlling factors in the business world. Gradually they came to exploit the public by fixing prices as high as possible. Especially the guilds in the building trade were extremely keen to seize opportunities for enormous gain after big fires, which frequently broke out in large towns, overcrowded as they were with light wooden houses. This tendency was particularly marked after the great fire in Yedo in Meireki III (1657), which destroyed the greater part of the city. Suddenly the various guilds in the building trade began to raise their rates so high that on June 4, the government decreed that wages should not be higher than the customary wages before the fire, and that if the guilds did not observe the order, the government itself would set wages. As the decree was not observed, the government actually fixed the wages as follows:<sup>1</sup>

The first-rate carpenter	.	3	<i>monme</i> <sup>2</sup> (silver)	including meals
" " roof-maker	.	3	"	" " "
" " sawyer	.	2	"	" " "
" " mat-layer	..	3	"	" " "
" " plasterer	..	3	"	" " "
" " mason	....	3	"	" " "

<sup>1</sup> *Koji-Rui-en*, vol viii, p 415.

<sup>2</sup> Three *monme* of silver in this period is equivalent to about sixty-four *sen* of the present currency, or about thirty-two cents in terms of the United States currency.



The demand for building was urgent, however, and such an arbitrary fixing of wages was easily violated. The guilds continued to hold meetings to fix current wages in spite of the proclamation of the government in September of the same year that those guilty of charging more than the customary prices should be severely punished. When in the early summer of Kwambun IV (1664) there was a typhoon the roof-makers' guild set their wages so high that those who needed to repair their roofs were greatly distressed. But the roof-makers had very little regard for the suffering of the people. Some roof-makers even left their work undone if they were offered better terms elsewhere, and thus tried to push the wage scale as high as possible. The government again interfered, and declared that anybody who was guilty of combination for unfair profits or of leaving unfinished the roofs under contract should be punished with imprisonment in a small cage. This proclamation had to be repeated every time that there was a storm which carried off many roofs, or when there was a big fire which destroyed a great number of houses affording a profitable opportunity for the building guilds. Toward the middle of the nineteenth century, the government appointed a committee for supervising the wages of artisans. The committee tried their utmost to comply with the government's policy of maintaining the customary wages, but at times the demand of the artisans for higher wages could not be disregarded when the prices of other things rose. Then the committee acted in behalf of the artisans and proclaimed a temporary raise in wages until the other prices should go down. Here is an example of such cases:<sup>1</sup>

The carpenter	{	Customary ..	3	<i>momme</i>	for labor,	1 2	<i>momme</i>	for meals
		Temporary ..	3 3	"	"	1.32	"	"
The plasterer	{	Customary ..	3	"	"	1.2	"	"
		Temporary ..	3.3	"	"	1 32	"	"

<sup>1</sup> *Koji Rui-en*, vol. iii, pp. 504-505.

The same rate was fixed for the furniture fitter, the roof-maker and the mat-layer. The above raise was deemed just by the committee because the price of rice was still high.

Great difficulty in price regulation was also met in the commercial field. Already in Kwanei VI (1629) the tendency to form a combination was apparent; and hence the government prohibited the combination of merchants who transacted business in Kyoto. The government was especially against the holding of necessities of life by speculative merchants, who always watched for a rising market. The government often seized the stored rice of crafty merchants and sold it at a reasonable price. It paid particular attention to the price of rice, because it believed that since rice was the most important of all commodities, the prices of other goods would follow the movement of the price of rice. In spite of government efforts to keep the price of rice down, however, the prices of other goods took an upward trend all the while; and the government proclaimed repeatedly that other prices should go down. Now and then it dictated what it considered just prices and ordered every merchant to post a list of prices on the front wall of his store. Such legislation was only sporadic and futile, however, for government officials, charmed by the amount of thank-money offered by the guild merchants, overlooked many things and gave a wide range of freedom to the merchants. Gradually the power of the merchants became so overwhelming that the masses of people in the towns, including small shopkeepers, began to complain. The complaint was directed not only against the exploiting guilds but against the government, which the people believed to be receiving bribes from the guilds. The attitude of the public became so threatening that finally in Tempo XIII (1842) the government issued a decree dissolving all business combinations. It was further decreed that everybody should be free to do

his business without being restricted in any way by the guild and that those who were guilty of combination or of attempted combination against the interests of other traders or the public should be expelled from the town and their property confiscated.<sup>1</sup> The result of the dissolution was not, however, to bring any relief to the situation. The market became more confused than ever, owing to the disorderly management of business by individual merchants, who were no longer restricted by the guild regulations. Since the guild was dissolved, it became quite impossible for an individual merchant of moderate capital to order his merchandise independently from distant places. Consequently only those few who had already accumulated a great sum of money were able to buy their merchandise at the risk of various damages during long-distance transportation. Thus the few big merchants began to keep a firmer grip upon the masses than the former guilds, which had been a combination of merchants both large and small. Prices rose higher than ever. The people began to realize that it was not the thank-money that had kept the prices high; they even began to long for guild regulation as the only remedy to the chaotic conditions. Finally the reinstitution of the guilds was proclaimed in 1851 with the reservation that the guilds should not restrict membership nor practise monopoly of any kind. Only those regulations which might facilitate circulation could be made.<sup>2</sup> This measure was again unsuccessful in keeping prices down, and from time to time the government summoned the representatives of various guilds in order to preach the morals of low prices. In 1867, the last year of the Shogun's administration, the government went so far as to establish bureaus of censorship of merchandise in Yedo, Osaka and various other towns, the effectiveness of which,

<sup>1</sup> *Koji Rui-en*, vol. iii, pp. 380-381.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, vol. vi, p. 95.

however, was not tested on account of the great political crisis that followed immediately.

While the Tokugawa government attempted to cope with the newly risen economic problems in towns, it had also to face various social problems which sprang up in the midst of the economic changes. One of the most important of these was fire prevention. As the city of Yedo became congested, whenever a fire broke out it worked terrible havoc with the wooden houses and caused great suffering to the inhabitants. The first of these big fires occurred in Meireki III (1657). The fire raged three days and three nights and destroyed the greater part of the city, including five hundred residences of daimyos and their retainers; 108,000 people perished. Since it happened in January, to make the matter worse, there was a big snowfall soon after the fire and the homeless refugees were threatened with freezing to death.<sup>1</sup> The government took up relief work and ordered all the idle attendants of the daimyos to return to their native provinces for a while. One of the reasons for the great number of deaths in the fire was poor communication, owing to the scarcity of bridges across the rivers which ran through the city. The great catastrophe of the fire induced the government to build the Ryogoku Bridge across the Asakusa, to construct a canal through Surugadai between the Ushigome Gate and the Izumi Bridge and to reclaim Tsukiji.<sup>2</sup> In the beginning of the Tokugawa administration, the responsibility for fire extinction was placed upon the daimyos, but the number of fires increased so rapidly that the firemen supplied by the daimyos were not sufficient to protect the city. Following the suggestion of Ōka Tadasuke, in the winter of Kyoho III (1718), the government ordered organizations of firemen among the townspeople to be sta-

<sup>1</sup> Katsumi Kuroita, *Kokushi no Kenkyu* (Tokyo, 1918), p. 759.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p. 761.

tioned in various districts<sup>1</sup> From this time on, there were two organizations of firemen in the city of Yedo, one of the daimyos and the other of the townspeople, organizations which were rather antagonistic toward each other

Another phenomenon that became remarkable in this town was a general rise in the standard of living The abundance of money and the growth of retail trade in the city increased the opportunities to satisfy the wants of the people, which were elastic and manifold; new types and kinds of goods were added constantly to those already in use The general standard of living grew so high that those things which had been considered as luxuries came to be taken as a matter of course. Luxury in food and clothing had become especially noticeable after the beginning of the Kyoho period (1716-1735). Merchants in the large towns grew vegetables in greenhouses in order to sell them at exorbitant prices out of season. The government, apprehending the evil effects of such practices, prohibited certain kinds of food to be sold except in their regular seasons; and the seasons were determined by the government.<sup>2</sup> Such regulations were easy to evade no matter how often the order was repeated by the town magistrates. Women no longer were satisfied with home-spun cloth, for they could now buy finer materials with their money. Tailors in towns came to do a thriving business by appealing to the vanity of women. Men also became extravagant in their dress. Matsudaira Sadanobu tells us the story of an old man who told him that before the Kyoho period, there were very few among the lower samurais who owned overcoats, so that the rest of the samurais had to borrow from those few when

<sup>1</sup> Katsumi Kuroita, *Kokushi no Kenkyu* (Tokyo, 1918), p. 805.

<sup>2</sup> *Koji Rui-en*, vol. viii, p. 334: bamboo sprouts after April, egg-plants after May, string beans after June, apples after July, pears after August, mushrooms after August, etc.

they needed such coats; but eighty years later, in the Tenmei period, everybody had an overcoat as a matter of course.<sup>1</sup> Still in this period, a coat of printed silk called *komonzome* was very rare. There was in this period, Professor Takegoshi says,<sup>2</sup> only one man in Suda Street in Yedo who possessed a coat of *komonzome* silk; and since he was afraid that his neighbors were jealous, he used to wear the coat only when he had gone far away from his street. Forty years later all respectable people of Yedo were wearing such expensive coats as a matter of convention. “Nowadays all girls wear *geta* and *sori* (footwear) that are decorated with velvet,” says a writer in the later Tokugawa period, “and yet nobody looks at them with wonder and admiration as they used to.”<sup>3</sup> In order to check such extravagances, the government made many regulations with regard to clothing. In the Shotoku period (1711-1716) the government prohibited the sale of cloth which was more expensive than six hundred *momme* of silver per piece (= about twenty-four yards); and forbade the tailors and embroiderers to accept any unusually luxurious order from their customers. The weavers were prohibited from manufacturing any new material and the dyers to design any new pattern.<sup>4</sup> If, in spite of the law, the manufacturers sent new merchandise to the merchants in Yedo, it was to be reported at once to the town-magistrate, no matter how small the quantity might be. Not only the clothes but all things that were considered luxurious by the authorities were forbidden. The enforcement of such laws the Shogun entrusted to the guilds, which were to watch lest their respective members break the laws and lest outsiders carry on a secret business in smuggling

<sup>1</sup> Matsudaira Sadanobu, “Seigo,” *Works*, vol. i, pp. 9-10.

<sup>2</sup> Yosaburo Takegoshi, *Nisen-gohyaku Nen Shi* (Tokyo, 1921), p. 683.

<sup>3</sup> *Koji Rui-en*, vol. vii, p. 305.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. viii, pp. 334-337.

the prohibited goods. Such an order was repeated many a time throughout the Tokugawa period. Especially the clothing of the commoners was strictly censored, so that they came to hide their luxuries beneath their humble outer garments; it gradually became a mark of fashion to have better and more expensive linings and underwear than outer garments. Even in the present generation, true descendants of Yedo tradesmen are proud to keep this tradition. As the general standard of living was raised and the people began to want those things which had formerly been considered luxuries as if they were necessities, the numerous governmental regulations were no longer enforceable. As the demand grew, prices rose higher and higher. This tendency was no longer to be checked by the effort of the government, an effort which was born and bred in the midst of rice economy.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE DECLINE OF THE VILLAGE COMMUNITY

WHILE money was transforming the castle town into a modern city, it was also invading agricultural communities. In the beginning of the seventeenth century, when money was scarce, the peasant made most of the necessities himself so that what little money he possessed was spent on those things he might be attracted to buy at fairs and markets or on a long journey for which he could not carry all his provisions on his back. In olden days, a peasant was obliged to make rope and straw bags to put away his crop; but by the beginning of the eighteenth century he could buy such things as well as other agricultural implements. Formerly, he made most of the manure for his field; and when he needed dry fish for manure, he got it from a fisherman for a load of rice. But due to the increased area under cultivation and the intensive cultivation caused by the increase of population during the peaceful era of the Shogunate, the demand for manure had increased so much that it gave rise to manure merchants. And as the price of manure rose, the peasants came to need more money. In the beginning of the Tokugawa period, one *ryo* would buy fifty or sixty barrels of dry herrings, but during the Kyoho period (1716-1735) the same amount of money would buy only seven or eight barrels; and in order to keep the field productive, a peasant was obliged to spend about two *ryo* on each *tan* (= .245 acre) of his field.<sup>1</sup> One *tan* of land yielded three *koku*, or about fifteen bushels, of rice according to Man-o

<sup>1</sup> Tanaka Kyugu, *Munkan Seiryō*, B J A P, vol i, p. 260.



Tokiharu, who wrote in 1725<sup>1</sup> The price of rice in the same year was about one *ryo* per *koku*. The cost for manure was, therefore, two-thirds of the entire produce. In ancient times, the half of the field lay fallow, but now the demand for food was so great that every bit of land must be cultivated every year, and consequently the land could no longer keep its productivity without being well manured. Not only for manure, but for agricultural implements, the peasants came to need a greater amount of money. A hoe which cost three hundred *momme* in the beginning of the Tokugawa period cost seven or eight hundred *momme* in the Kyoho period<sup>2</sup> Even the horse, which a peasant used to buy at a fair for one or two *ryo*, came to cost at least ten *ryo* during the Kyoho period.<sup>3</sup> Thus the need of money among the peasants became more pressing every day as money economy became rooted in society

As the need of money increased, it became a great temptation for a peasant to get the needed money by mortgaging or selling his land. This tendency had appeared as early as the beginning of the Tokugawa period so that the Shogun of the earlier period prohibited the outright sale of land. This policy was adopted by most of the daimyos in their respective domains, but it was after the middle of the seventeenth century that the rulers began to appreciate the need of such prohibitive laws. The first proclamation against the sale of land in perpetuity that included strict terms of penalty for violation was issued by Shogun Iyemitsu in Kwangi XX (1643).<sup>4</sup> The law declared that a person who had alienated his land should be imprisoned, and if he died during his imprisonment his son should take his

<sup>1</sup> Man-o Tokiharu, *Kwan-no Kohon Roku*, 1725, vol. i, p. 26

<sup>2</sup> Tanaka Kyugu, *op. cit.*, p. 261.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 261.

<sup>4</sup> Oishi Hisanori, *Jikata Bonrei Roku* (1791-1794), vol. vii.

place. The buyer, too, was to be punished by fines and confiscation of the land, and if he died before the termination of the punishment his son should take his place. Finally, the village chief who had endorsed the deed was to be dismissed.<sup>1</sup> This law, however, was evaded in the form of *raino-uri*, which meant that the original owner of the land borrowed money on the condition that he should pay the tax on the land while his creditor took the entire produce of the land. This was practised so often that it too was later prohibited. And yet a peasant who was in great need of money could evade the law in various other ways. He might pledge his land on the condition that he would return the money by a certain specified day; but it was often the case that he could not pay back the debt and the land was taken by the creditor. Or a peasant might apparently bequeath his land to a certain man and secretly receive a sum of money from the latter. Another way of dealing was *nengen-uri*, the lease for a certain period; that is to say, a man hands over his land to another for a certain amount of money on the condition that the creditor will cultivate the land for a period of ten or twenty years, at the expiration of which the land shall be returned to its original owner, if the money be paid back. All these dealings demanded also the payment of interest annually during the period of contract. Thus by the Kyoho period, the evasion of the law had become so prevalent that in effect it was equivalent to the sale of land. This condition called forth various arguments against the prohibition of such sales. The author of *Keizai Mondo Hiroku* argued that the retention of a law which the authorities could not enforce would lead the people to disrespect the government, for it looked as if the government were teaching the people to be dishonest.<sup>2</sup> Tanaka Kyugu argued

<sup>1</sup> Fujita Yukoku, *Kwan-no Wakumon*, 1779, B.J.A.P., vol. xx, pp. 152-153.

<sup>2</sup> Shoji Koki, *Keizai Mondo Hiroku*, about 1841, B.J.A.P., vol. xxii, pp. 472-473.

that without freedom to sell land it was impossible for peasants to pay their taxes<sup>1</sup> In some provinces, the sale of land was finally granted to peasants within the domain of the same daimyos; but the peasants were not allowed to sell their land to samurais or townspeople This law, however, proved very inconvenient because it was townspeople who could best afford to buy land with their money. If a peasant could not sell his land to a townsman, he might find no buyer among the peasants, the majority of whom were just as poor as he. So some political economists, like Shoji Koki, advocated the sale of land even to samurais and townspeople if they were of the same province. He argued that since the merchants had the funds for it, it would be more profitable for the state to have them undertake the cultivation of new fields<sup>2</sup> In fact, long before Shoji Koki's time, land had already been sold to townspeople or merchants; and by the beginning of the nineteenth century the merchant class seems to have owned a considerable amount of land. This view is further supported by many writings of the later Tokugawa period attacking the land-owning merchants.

The dealings in land led to the differentiation of the agricultural class into several kinds: i. e., those who owned a great deal of land; those who rented their land from a land-owning merchant or peasant; and those who still held their hereditary land. When a wealthy land-owning peasant wanted to cultivate his land, his family was no longer able to do the entire work, so that it became necessary for him to hire help from outside. Laborers were easily found, since there were many who had alienated their land and wanted to earn their living by working on other men's land. The employing farmer gave his laborers meals and occasion-

<sup>1</sup> Tanaka Kyugu, *op. cit.*, p. 676.

<sup>2</sup> Shoji Koki, *op. cit.*, pp. 390, 480.

ally clothes, and also paid them money wages. But as the demand for labor in towns increased, many farm laborers were drawn to the towns by the higher wages. Accordingly it became quite costly to cultivate land by hired labor; and most land owners began to find it more profitable to rent their land to small peasants.

While such changes were taking place, the burden of taxation began to be felt more and more by the small peasants. Since the sale of land was prohibited, the needy peasants had secretly to solicit the rich to buy their land. The rich, who were in a more favorable position to bargain, would so word the terms of the deed as to escape the burden of taxation. For instance, if a peasant wished to sell seven out of the ten *tan* of his land, the buyer would pay him money for the seven *tan* but make him sign the deed as if he had sold only three *tan* and retained seven *tan*. As a result, the poor peasant was legally the owner of seven *tan* in spite of the fact that he had actually only three *tan*: consequently he was obliged to pay the taxes upon seven *tan*, while the buyer paid only upon three *tan* but reserved the produce from the seven *tan*.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to this injustice, small peasants had to suffer from the increasing demands of the lord, who likened the agricultural class to sesame, which yielded the more sesame oil the harder it was squeezed. This squeezing became tighter and tighter as the lord discovered the possibility of marketing the tax-rice for money returns. The rate of taxation, that had been in general forty percent, was now raised to fifty or even to seventy percent. Due to the eagerness of the lord to sell the rice when the market was favorable, he sometimes demanded that the peasants pay the tax in advance or several times during the year, and very often the assessment of taxation on all grades of fields was made

<sup>1</sup> Fujita Yukoku, *op. cit.*, p. 107.

according to the estimate based upon the samples on the best field. The tax on the land other than rice-fields became heavier, too. It had been customary to pay the tax on this land in metal money—in copper money in Kwantō, or eastern Japan, and in silver money in Kwansei, or western Japan; but the amount had been insignificant in comparison with the tax on the rice-fields, which was paid in rice. When money became the universal medium of exchange, however, the lord began to squeeze money as well as rice out of the peasants. The amount of tax on land other than rice-fields was fixed and was not changed according to the produce of the year. Thus the peasants were obliged to pay the fixed amount even to the point of bankruptcy. The exaction of such taxes became severer after the middle of the seventeenth century. For at this time, the lord was met with fluctuations in the prices of products, such as peas, oats and beans. Hence he began to demand the payment of taxes according to the highest market prices of these products.<sup>1</sup> Toward the beginning of the eighteenth century many daimyos had come to demand the annual money payment of levies which had formerly been in kind or only occasional. For instance, a certain village used to pay a tax on its hunting privilege according to the amount of game, but now it was obliged to pay one *bu* per hundred *koku* of produce of the village though the village had ceased to hunt.<sup>2</sup> The time for collecting such taxes became quite arbitrary and the peasants were forced to pay them although they might be bankrupt. If a peasant failed to pay his tax, he was put

<sup>1</sup> Fujita Yukoku, *op. cit.*, pp. 118-119

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 117-118

The average price of rice during the first half of the eighteenth century was a little less than one *ryo* per *koku*. Since one *bu* was equal to one quarter of a *ryo*, the imposition in this case was not heavy. Yet the injustice and unfairness involved in such imposition was unbearable.

in a small dingy hut like one of the outcast, and his land was ordered to be cultivated by the whole village. But the land of such a poor peasant was liable to be too poor to produce enough to pay the tax. In such a case, the whole village was made responsible for the deficit.

Since rice was no longer accepted universally as the medium of exchange, the peasant had to sell his rice in order to obtain money. The price of rice was determined by big merchants in the rice exchange in Osaka and it was reported to all local exchanges by *hikyaku*, or runners. It was, therefore, impossible for a poor ignorant peasant to understand the workings of such a financial world beyond his village. So he would go out to a nearby town to sell his rice and take any amount of money that was offered by a merchant. Usually the price of rice was so low that a peasant could not afford to buy even the barest necessities with the amount of money he earned. Then he would borrow money to meet that year's expenses with the promise to return it the following year. But all through the latter half of the Tokugawa period, the price of rice was relatively lower than other prices, and with a few exceptions due to natural calamities such as the Kyoho and Tenmei famines, the trend of the price of rice was downward. Consequently, a peasant who borrowed money was always in a disadvantageous position for paying his debts.

Thus against the invasion of money, which was breaking up the self-sufficient economy of the village community, the smaller peasants, who constituted the majority of these communities, were quite helpless. Their misery increased. They made desperate efforts to fight off the distress that was overwhelming them. It was clear that the raising of rice alone was not enough to support a peasant family; so peasants began to raise those things which had good market values, such as tobacco and melons. During the Kyoho

period (1716-1735) sweet potatoes were first introduced into Japan; and after that the peasants learned to raise potatoes as their chief foodstuff so that they might sell all the rice. Some peasants found auxiliary occupations in keeping small retail shops, such as dry-goods stores and wine shops. Such efforts of the peasants, however, were always regarded unfavorably by the authorities; in some domains, retail shops in the village were even prohibited, because it was believed that such things led people to laziness and extravagance.

Another means that seemed to promise escape to the villagers from the miserable conditions of living was infanticide. The need for money was growing every day and the demand of the lord for more taxes was relentless. So the peasant tried to relieve himself from the strain by reducing the number of mouths that had to be fed. The killing of infants at birth was no longer secret, while the more conscientious remained unmarried until very late. Still ninety-nine out of a hundred were so extremely poor that they pawned their winter clothes in the spring and got them back after harvest. In order to stop the evil practice of infanticide, Honda Rimei proposed a mother's pension, by which a mother should be given two barrels of rice annually from the birth to the tenth year of the child.<sup>1</sup> Takemoto Ryuhei proposed a similar measure of relief.<sup>2</sup> Such proposals, however, did not often result in action, because the government was also too poor to carry out such expensive legislation.

Even in normal times, the peasants did not have enough to live on. They ate cheaper grains and potatoes, and very seldom tasted the rice they produced, for it was taken away as tax, and what little was left them had to be sold to get necessary money. The sufferings in famine years were indescribable. The peasants had no stored food or money, as

<sup>1</sup> Honda Rimei, *Keisei Hisaku* (1789-1800), B. J. A. P., vol. xii, p. 66.

<sup>2</sup> Takemoto Ryuhei, *Kwan-no Saku*, 1815, B. J. A. P., vol. xx, p. 595.

they lived from hand to mouth. Multitudes of people died of hunger. Such a desperate situation drove the peasants to appeal to the lord, and when their appeal was not heard, a furious riot broke out. In Meiwa I (1764) the peasants of Chichibu-kori in Musashi province united with the peasants of Yashu. Together they attacked wealthy people in the vicinity and plundered rice and money from their storehouses. The officials of the Tokugawa government arrested many of the rioters and imprisoned them in Yedo. But the prisons were so overcrowded that many died from suffocation.<sup>1</sup> The government saw the danger in such riots and in 1722 forbade the peasants to form a combination or party of any sort or to present a threatening appeal to their rulers. Even such prohibitions could not suppress the hunger-stricken peasants, and after Shotoku IV (1714) there were over fifty local uprisings of peasants recorded in various historical writings. Doubtless, there were many more which did not appear in literature.<sup>2</sup> Sometimes such concerted action of the peasants, though temporary, was strong enough to force the lord to yield. Yet some political philosophers disdainfully held that it was not mercy but cowardice which prompted the feudal officials to grant the demands of the peasants.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, the more sympathetic writers took a different view. "It is not an attempt to seize land under their control, . . ." explained Kamizawa Teikan, "but it is the exaction and oppression of the lord that makes the peasants so desperate and angry that they are driven into furious revolt."<sup>4</sup>

While the people were struggling so hard for their exist-

<sup>1</sup> Kuroita, *Kokushi no Kenkyu* (Tokyo, 1918), p. 815.

<sup>2</sup> Manabu Sano, *Nippon Keizai Shi* (Tokyo, 1924), p. 182.

<sup>3</sup> Shingu Ryotei, *Yabureya no Tsuzukuri Banashi*: (1843-1844), B.J.A.P., vol. xxi, pp. 51 *et seq.*

<sup>4</sup> Kamizawa Teikan, *Okinagusa*, 1776, vol. xii, p. 122.



ence in the villages, there was another way of escape for the starving peasants. That was in the city. The opportunity for earning a living caused a drift of rural population into town. The land, which had been a source of subsistence for the peasant, had now become a curse to him. Just because of the fact that he was attached to the land, he was obliged to bear the heavy burden of taxation; while if he abandoned it and sought an occupation in town he not only was exempt from taxation but could earn his living in money. Besides, the pleasures and amusements of town life tempted many young people from the village. Parents who could neither support their children upon their meagre incomes nor see any prospects of comfortable life for them in the village sought to send their sons and daughters to serve in the households of townspeople as apprentices or maids. When the young people became accustomed to town life, they despised the miserable toilsome existence of the village, and most of them stayed in town for the rest of their lives. In 1712, the decrease of the rural population was already noticeable. The Tokugawa government began a strict census, and decreed that all those who had left their native villages should go back.<sup>1</sup> Even if they went back to their native places, however, they did not take up agriculture but opened retail shops—the business they had learned in the town. Although the intermingling of tradesmen and peasants was unfavorably regarded by most legislators and political economists of the time as injurious to agriculture, the village could no longer retain its pure and simple form of peasant community.

Not only young people but bankrupt peasants were driven into towns. This phenomenon was especially marked in famine years. Honda Rimei states that after the famine of Tenmei VII (1787) land sufficient to produce several mil-

<sup>1</sup> Fujita Yukoku, *op. cit.*, pp. 85-86.

lion *koku* was abandoned<sup>1</sup> The land was so run down and so heavily burdened with taxation that nobody wanted to buy it or even receive it as gift. At first a runaway peasant was hunted by his relatives and by the company of five for at least six months, and the land was cultivated by the company or by the entire village during his absence. Toward the end of the eighteenth century, the number of runaways increased so greatly and the towns afforded such ready refuges for the runaways that it was impossible to trace them. After the eighteenth century, the increase of waste land and the decrease of population in the villages became a most serious problem. Indeed, as Fujita Yukoku lamented, "every year the population is decreasing, and there is more waste land day by day. . . . This is the universal evil of the present age."<sup>2</sup> He estimated the decrease of rural population in Mito domain in the period of twenty-one years between Kyōho XI and Enkyō IV (1726-1747) to be 30,000, and thirty years later to be 90,000. Matsudaira Sadanobu stated that in his domain alone there was a decrease of 1,400,000 in the rural population between the two consecutive censuses during the Tenmei period (1781-1788).<sup>3</sup> We do not know accurately the movement of population in those days, owing to the lack of systematic censuses in the Tokugawa period; but a few such examples are enough to show the tendency of the period.

Many writers of the period concluded that taxation had to be reduced in order to check the decline of the village community. On the other hand, many attributed its decay to the laziness of the peasants.

In olden days, the village paid taxes at the rate of forty per-

<sup>1</sup> Honda Rimeī, *op cit.*, p. 71

<sup>2</sup> Fujita Yukoku, *op cit.*, p. 82

<sup>3</sup> Matsudaira Sadanobu, "Bukka Rān," *Works*, vol. i.

cent, but they could get along comfortably as they produced more because they were industrious and spent less because they were thrifty. The present generation is not so industrious; therefore they produce less. Although the rate of taxation has not changed much, the cost of living has increased five or ten fold, and they are getting more and more distressed every day.<sup>1</sup>

What led them to luxury and laziness and a taste for an easy life was, according to these observers, the influence of town life acting through small shops around the village, shops which stimulated the wants of the peasants by displaying city fashions and dainty eatables. Furthermore, amusement places in the vicinity of the village were held to stimulate desires for sensual pleasures and to bring the atmosphere of the town into the country. Uyezaki Kuhachiro, accordingly, advocated that the villagers should not be permitted to go out of their own villages even for a night. For if a peasant went up to Yedo, he argued, the simple fellow was dazzled by its gaiety and tempted into evil ways, and would never more be satisfied with village life.<sup>2</sup> Shingu Ryotei, on the other hand, advocated the abolition of amusement places in the vicinity of the village and the complete separation of tradesmen and peasants. "If the mingling of tradesmen and peasants were prohibited," Shoji Koki also argued, "... it would bring prosperity to both classes," for the tradesmen would associate only with their own kind and would stimulate one another in their work, while villagers would not be tempted to buy unnecessary things so that they could be more thrifty and industrious.<sup>3</sup>

While the rulers and scholars were reprimanding the agricultural class for its laziness and luxury, they were also

<sup>1</sup> Tonegawa Kyoho, *Nogei Yodan*, 1783, B.J.A.P., vol. xiv, p. 608.

<sup>2</sup> Uyezaki Kuhachiro, *Josho*, 1787, B.J.A.P., vol. xii, p. 384.

<sup>3</sup> Shoji Koki, *op. cit.*, p. 380.

contemplating various methods of encouraging agriculture: for they believed that one of the serious reasons for the decreased productivity of the village was lack of encouragement. It was insisted that the agricultural class should have the highest status among the common people and that the peasant should therefore be addressed as "honorable peasant",<sup>1</sup> and the sagacious lord, Matsudaira Sadanobu, urged feudal officials and daimyos to set the example by paying more respect to the peasant than to the merchant.<sup>2</sup> In order to increase the rural population, Takemoto Ryuhei proposed that men over thirty and women over twenty should receive financial aid from the government upon their marriage and that the children born to them should be properly looked after by the government.<sup>3</sup> But skeptics like Fujita Yukoku doubted the efficacy of such legislation, fearing that it might degrade morality by making men and women irresponsible for their own children, and that the children so raised would not in the least help to relieve the present crisis in the village community.<sup>4</sup> Finally, even if it had been admitted that such legislation would be beneficial, it could not have been carried out owing to the lack of funds on the part of the rulers.

In the meantime, the tendency toward the concentration of land in the hands of the rich came to be discussed more seriously as the cause of the decline of the village community. Some advocated a radical land reform, believing that the desertion of land would not stop unless land was equally divided among the peasants. Others held that equal division of land was impracticable, if not impossible. For in Japan, there are a great many mountains and hills, leav-

<sup>1</sup> Shoji Koki, *op. cit.*, p. 412.

<sup>2</sup> Matsudaira Sadanobu, "Kokuhon Ron," *Works*, vol. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Takemoto Ryuhei, *op. cit.*, p. 595.

<sup>4</sup> Fujita Yukoku, *Hoji* (1792-1807), B J A P, vol. xx, pp. 49-50.

ing very little level land which could easily be divided in any equitable fashion. Some daimyos actually tried the equal division of land among their peasants, but as a rule, such an experiment ended in disaster. For instance, Todo, the daimyo of Ise, confiscated all the land of his peasants and divided it equally among them. At first the smaller peasants were delighted with the reform, but the rich peasants, from whom the land was taken away, closed their doors to the smaller peasants, who used to come to borrow money. Hence the latter had to suffer a great deal of inconvenience. Gradually they began to regret the reform and their discontent was easily utilized by the rich to cause a revolt against the new land law.

Some people argued that the reason for the peasants' desertion of the village was that they were getting too intelligent; they held, therefore, that it was best to keep them ignorant in order to make them stay in the fields. Matsu-daira Sadanobu disapproved of letting peasants over thirteen years of age learn how to read and write. The rulers still held to their conviction that the peasants existed merely for the ruling class, who had a perfect right to bind them to the village and drive them to work. But efforts of legislators and discourses of scholars were of little avail in checking the decline of the village community. The peasants, who had been intentionally kept ignorant and illiterate by the ruling class, had now learned one lesson well: they could do everything, they felt, if they had money. Naturally, agriculture, which offered such meagre returns, had become distasteful to them. The custom, indeed the necessity, for using money had at last penetrated all the classes, and had become an established part of daily life for peasant and townsman alike. The village community based upon a rice economy was destined to disintegrate.

## CHAPTER V

### THE DECLINE OF THE SAMURAI CLASS

IN the strictly feudal age, when land was the determining factor, metal money was considered a necessity only for travelling and for paying artisans and traders who had no definite income in rice. For the samurai especially, who had a feudal stipend in rice, money was considered unnecessary and unedifying. It was held contrary to the ethics of the samurai to have any treasures other than brave warriors, excellent horses, well-fitted armour, sharp weapons and a well-built fortress. The samurai was taught from his childhood to avoid any attachment to worldly riches, especially money, which would endanger the purity of his heart. Such ethical principles could be maintained, however, only in a society where money played a very insignificant part and when land was still the dominating factor in economic life. When money came to take the place of land and all values were fixed in terms of money, the samurai could no longer remain indifferent to pecuniary affairs. This change became more marked as the need for money among the samurai class grew.

This increasing need for money among the samurai class was due to the journeys of the daimyos back and forth between their domains and Yedo. This travelling was imposed upon them by the Shogun as a duty of the vassals. Within his own domain, a daimyo might force his subjects to provide for his travelling needs for lodging, food, transportation, etc., but as soon as he stepped into another daimyo's domain, he had to pay for the services, food and lodging for himself

and his attendants. The Shogun, who formerly had been simply one of the warrior lords, had to watch always against the rise of his rivals. The policy he followed to prevent conspiracy was first of all the weakening of the economic power of the daimyos, who, though they professed to be loyal vassals of the Shogun, might rise up at any favorable opportunity. The requirement of the biennial journey to Yedo was one of the methods of weakening the daimyos economically, not only because in travelling the daimyos had to spend so much money and provisions, but because the long absence of the daimyos from their domains would prevent them from looking after the industry of their subjects sufficiently to make possible a successful conspiracy. The daimyos, furthermore, were required to keep their families in Yedo in permanent residence and to stay there themselves throughout every second year. As each daimyo brought many attendants and servants to serve in his household, the maintenance of this luxurious residence involved heavy expenditures. If a daimyo was from a faraway province, he found it very inconvenient to bring all the provisions and servants from his own domain, and he gradually came to buy necessary goods and services in Yedo. To meet the increasing demands of such daimyos, artisans and traders began to flock to Yedo. They produced many things which stimulated the wants of the daimyos' households and led them to luxurious habits unknown in their own provinces. The wives of the daimyos began a competitive display in regard to mansions, clothes and food. They began to learn the fashions of the city in music and the arts and were no longer satisfied with the crude products of their own rural provinces.

In addition to such household expenses, the daimyos had to spend money for the Shogun and his ministers in order to be received favorably by them. The Shogun, who was ever eager to have the daimyos waste their money, paid rather

frequent visits to their residences. These visits were honors which the daimyos did not appreciate in their hearts but had to accept with all possible appearance of joy and gratitude. Every such imposed visit involved enormous expenses on the part of the daimyo. Some of them built new houses for the celebrated occasion. The daimyo of Kaga, for instance, spent over a million *ryo* for the new palace which he built for the distinguished guest.

How then did the daimyos get the money? In the first place, the daimyos had their rice to sell in the market. During the period of feudal strife preceding the Tokugawa period, the greatest problem of the daimyo was to store ample provisions in his castle, for every other lord was his potential enemy, and without sufficient provisions in his storehouses there was no security. Now that peace had been established by the strong and sagacious Tokugawa Shogun, the daimyos began to seek a market for their surplus tax-rice. The development of towns, on the other hand, added to the group of people who had to buy their food, and gave rise to a class of rice merchants, a class which was to play a most important rôle in the economic life of Japan. In the beginning of the seventeenth century, there were a few wholesale merchants who bought rice from various daimyos. Gradually one of these merchants, one Yodoya Tatsugoro, began to surpass all the other rice merchants in wealth and power, and most of the daimyos came to trade exclusively with Yodoya until finally the house of Yodoya assumed the form of a rice market, where all the middlemen in the rice trade came to deal. Before the Kwanbun period (1661-1673), all the rice sold by the daimyos had to be removed from the storehouses of the daimyos within thirty days;<sup>1</sup> but as the merchants came to see a profit in holding rice out of the retail market longer, they sometimes postponed unduly the claiming of

<sup>1</sup> *Koji Rui-en*, vol. ix, p. 538



their rice until the demand became greater. This caused considerable complaint about the high price of rice among the town inhabitants. In 1663, therefore, the magistrate of Osaka proclaimed the order of the Shogun that all rice bought by the rice brokers must be removed from the storehouses of the daimyos within ten days.<sup>1</sup> In the beginning, the dealing between the daimyos and the rice merchants was strictly a cash transaction, and as soon as the agent of a daimyo received the rice he sold it to the merchant who offered the highest price. But as the daimyo's need for money grew, they began to issue notes in anticipation of the rice harvest and ask the brokers to buy these notes, which were guaranteed to be readily exchangeable with rice whenever so desired. It was these notes that strengthened the rice market in Dojima, Osaka. Indeed, this market came to assume the character of a stock exchange. Before 1732, anybody could become a member of the exchange, but after that year only those who had obtained a permit from the magistrate could have dealings there. At one time there were about 1,300 members.<sup>2</sup> Up to Genroku VIII (1695), the most powerful of these merchants was Yodoya, but since he arrogated to himself too great power and utterly disregarded the orders of the Shoguns concerning trade regulations, his business was placed under ban. But the exchange was still held in the same place and its organization became firmly established as time went on. The members of the exchange elected four managers from among the oldest and most influential of their group, and the four managers took turns in conducting the affairs for a whole year. If there was a vacancy in the management, a new member was elected by all the members of the exchange. Besides the managers, there were several assistants. The officers were paid out of the common

<sup>1</sup> *Koji Ru-en*, vol. ix, p. 538

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, vol. ix, p. 528.

treasury of the members. All important matters concerning transactions could not be decided by the arbitrary judgment of the officers but had to be referred to all the members.<sup>1</sup> It was customary for the daimyos to call in the notes issued every year in exchange for the rice still left in the storehouses, so that they could make room for the new rice. But in time the daimyos, learning that they could readily get cash by selling rice-notes and that the holders of the notes did not claim their rice all at once, began to issue more notes than the amount of rice actually available. This practice had already become so prevalent by the middle of the eighteenth century that the Tokugawa government prohibited it in 1760, and in 1763, and again in 1765,<sup>2</sup> but the practice was so general and kept so secret that it was beyond governmental supervision. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, with the exception of the rice-notes of Higo, Chikuzen, Chikugo, Hiroshima, Hizen and Kaga, daimiates which were more prosperous than the others, all the notes in circulation were more or less doubtful. The presence of false notes was a great source of speculation, and whenever a group of notes was found to be valueless there was a sudden jump in the price of rice and a consequent disturbance in the financial world.

The samurais, who received their feudal stipends in rice from their overlords (the Shogun or the daimyo as the case might be) had to sell their rice also in order to obtain money. Formerly the samurais used to go to the storehouses of their lords on the prescribed days of the year to receive their stipends. There were tea-rooms in front of the storehouses, where they might sit and wait patiently for their turns to receive the rice; but by and by they came to delegate the tea-room keepers to receive the rice for them. Then gradually

<sup>1</sup> *Koji Rui-en*, vol. ix, p. 528.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 550-551.

well-to-do tea-room keepers began to advance money to the impatient samurais on the rice due them and finally took up the whole business of receiving and selling the rice, and acted as the go-betweens of the capitalists and the samurais. Thus came into existence the *fudasashi*, that class of rice brokers who acted as the regular go-betweens for the rice merchants and the samurais. When the *fudasashi* had finished a transaction, he sent the account to the samurai somewhat in the following manner: <sup>1</sup>

“ An account rendered for the spring instalment received ”

Rice received . . . . . 50 *hyo* (straw-bags), which at 3 to 5 *sho*  
[= 35 *koku*] per *hyo* equal 17 *koku* 5 *to*, or in money  
20 *ryo* gold or 700 *momme* silver

For commission . . . . 2 *bu* per 100 *hyo* or 15 *momme* silver ”

The number of *fudasashi* varied from ninety-six to one hundred nine at different periods. In 1724, they formed a guild in order to strengthen their position against unreasonable demands of the samurais and against the intrusion of other rice merchants into their field. It was the custom of the guild that no member should accept the business of a samurai who had broken his connection with another member unless he received the consent of the latter and the samurai paid all arrears due him.

Another method of obtaining money used by the daimyos was the imposition of a money tax on agricultural land other than rice-fields. This sort of taxation had been practised some time before the Tokugawa period. In Kwantō, for instance, where the Chinese copper money, *Eirakusen*, was abundant, the peasant paid the tax on the upland in that money, while in Kwansei, they paid it in silver. The amount was, however, really insignificant, because in most provinces the amount of such land was less than a third of that of the

<sup>1</sup>“ Materials for the Study of Private Law in Old Japan,” *Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan*, vol. xx, suppl., pp. 191-192.

rice-fields, and besides, such land was assessed at a very much lower rate than the rice-fields, the best upland being assessed as the second or third grade of rice-fields. Moreover, the amount of money circulating among the peasants was so little that the money revenue of the lord was insignificant at any rate. But with the growth of commerce, the upland began to be cultivated more and more. The products of such land was marketed profitably and the money income of the peasants increased. Thereupon, even those daimyos who used to exempt the fields other than the rice-fields from taxation began to find the taxation of these fields a great source of revenue. Such fields included mulberry-fields, papulus-fields, lacquer-fields, tea-fields, flax-fields, tobacco-fields, cotton-fields, etc., besides vegetable and fruit gardens, the products of which had come to fetch very good prices. In the beginning the amount of tax was proportional to the amount of crop of the year, but since there was likely to be an evasion of taxation by thinning the crop before the tax assessors came to survey the fields, by the middle of the Tokugawa period most daimyos were collecting a fixed amount regardless of the crop in a particular year<sup>1</sup>. Thus the money income from those fields had become, by the beginning of the nineteenth century, such an important item in the finance of the daimyos that Umetsuji Kisei asserted that the tax-yielding upland was the source of all treasures and the root of all circulation in the world<sup>2</sup>.

As money became more desirable than rice as the medium of exchange, many daimyos watched for every opportunity

<sup>1</sup> Zetsuma, *Dempho Zatsuwu* "It was a wise policy to tax the upland regularly and to abolish the annual assessment. For instance, it is very easy to make a good harvest of beans look like a poor one, for if you pull out here and there those plants which have borne fruit already, you can deceive the tax gatherer very well. Besides this, peasants may evade taxation in various other evil ways."

<sup>2</sup> Umetsuji Kisei, *Yumwa no Ho*, 1843, B J A P, vol. XXI, pp. 470-471

to change taxes which were originally in kind into taxes in money. In olden times, some daimyos required their peasants to bring in a certain amount of hay every year to feed the horses of their warriors; but after the beginning of the seventeenth century, under the strong control of the Shogunate, there had been little warfare, so that it had become unnecessary for the daimyos to maintain a large fighting force. Consequently, the levy of hay from the peasants had become superfluous, and the daimyos began to demand the hay-tax in money.<sup>1</sup> As money became more abundant, it became more desirable both for the daimyo and the peasants to commute the latter's personal service to a money payment. Those daimyos who formerly received gifts of manufactured goods from the peasants, such as cloth, straw mats, raincoats, etc., now came to demand money gifts instead. These money payments increased more and more as time went on, until hardly anything in the village escaped taxation. In one village, there was a big nut-bearing *torreya* tree, and the peasants used to present their lord with six *sho*, or 11.4 quarts, of the nuts annually. Later the tree decayed and did not yield any more nuts; yet the peasants were obliged to continue the gift, which after 1727 was paid in silver.<sup>2</sup> The wheels of water mills were taxed according to their size. The old pond from which fish used to be presented to the lord was taxed even after the peasants stopped fishing from it. The peasants were required to pay for the fallen leaves they collected in the lord's forest in order to make manure. The village smith, the wood cutter, the hunter, the carpenter, the brewer,—practically all artisans—were obliged to pay *unjo* or thank-money. In Chikuzen province, the peasants were required to pay forty *momme* of silver if they built houses

<sup>1</sup> Oishi Hisanori, *Jikata Bonrei Roku*, 1791-1794, vol. v.

<sup>2</sup> Higuchi Koko, *Zeifu Santei Shunan*, 1818, B.J.A.P., vol. xiv, pp. 518-519

with tile roofs. In some other villages, every window of the peasants' house was taxed.

Such extortionate taxation caused unspeakable suffering to the peasants, a fact which led to the decline of the village community. Still the wants of the daimyos increased so greatly that many began to feel the financial strain. Most of the daimyos became unable to pay full stipends to their retainers. They paid only a part, promising to pay the remainder later, but since they had no prospect of more revenues, it was in effect equivalent to cutting down the retainers' stipends permanently. Some daimyos reduced the stipends to less than half the original amounts, a reduction which caused a great deal of distress among the samurais. It was no longer possible for them to live wholly upon the stipends, and some of them found a supplementary source of income in doing job work for artisans, such as making sandal-straps and lanterns <sup>1</sup>. Many of the samurais were too indignant to endure the treatment of their lords and left them never to return. Those daimyos who could not afford to maintain all their samurais not only reduced the number when samurais died without heirs but made any offensive act of a samurai a pretext for discontinuing his stipend. Consequently, toward the end of the Tokugawa period, the country was full of those samurais who received no bounty from their lords; and their discontent with the existing order of society was a powerful factor in the break-down of the entire feudal régime.

When the daimyos and the samurais, who had been the best customers of the townspeople, were no longer able to pay cash for their purchases they started credit accounts. At first the merchants were willing to deal with the daimyos and the samurais in this manner, but since the daimyos had no intention of settling their accounts, many merchants became

<sup>1</sup> Umetsuji Kisei, *op cit.*, p 499.

bankrupt. Thus the trust of the townspeople in the daimyos began to fail. A daimyo could have forced the merchants in his own domain to make contributions occasionally, but most of the wealthy merchants were in the great commercial towns like Yedo, Osaka and Kyoto, which were under the jurisdiction of the Shogunate, therefore, the daimyos could not act too arbitrarily. They had to solicit money from the wealthy merchants, and their debts accumulated year by year. Already towards the end of the seventeenth century, Kumazawa Banzō estimated that the total amount of the daimyos' debts was a hundred times the amount of cash in the country<sup>1</sup> A daimyo with an annual income of sixty thousand *koku* might have debts amounting to 1,800,000 *ryo*, which was about sixty times his annual income<sup>2</sup> Since most of the debtor daimyos failed to pay back their debts, merchants became reluctant to lend them more money. It required a skilful solicitor, therefore, to persuade the merchants to be accommodating. Although a daimyo pretended to be superior to a merchant, he was at heart afraid of the latter. When a merchant was not favorably disposed to lend money without securities, daimyos would offer to pay the debts with the next crop of rice, which was expected to come in as a tax. Thus finally the whole control of tax-rice fell into the hands of the merchants at whose mercy the daimyos were now obliged to live.

The samurais, who were just as much distressed as the daimyos, also began to borrow money from the *fudasashi*, the rice brokers for the samurais, upon the promise to pay them back out of their rice stipends. By the time they received the stipends, however, they had borrowed more money upon a still more remote income, so that the debts were accumulated at such a rate that finally the *fudasashi* gained

<sup>1</sup> Dazai Shundai, *Keizai Roku Shui*, 1730, B J.A P, vol. vi, p. 289.

<sup>2</sup> Honda Rimei, *Keisai Hisaku* (1789-1800), B J.A P, vol. xii, pp. 65-66.

the entire control over the stipend-rice. Samurais were no longer able even to touch their rice, and they came to spend all their energy and time in devising better methods of borrowing more money from the reluctant merchants. According to Umetsuji Kisei, the total debt of the samurais to the merchants in Osaka amounted to sixty million *ryo* and they paid annually three million *koku* as the interest on the debt. The author lamented the situation, as it would mean that the samurai class would have to remain the interest-paying slave of the merchant class for ages to come.<sup>1</sup>

The samurai class attempted to combat the rising power of the merchant class through political and legal means, which were at that time their exclusive weapons. In 1716, the court of the Shogunate issued a nullification order proclaiming that the debts of the samurais up to that date were null and void.<sup>2</sup> In December, 1730, the government prohibited the townspeople from flocking to the front of the samurai mansions to collect their overdue debts. In February, 1844, debts were decreed payable to the rice-brokers in yearly instalments without interest.<sup>3</sup> Many a time, the rate of interest on money loans in general was lowered, and yet when the samurais were pressed the government would again issue a nullification order. The instructions issued to the magistrates by the Council of State in February 1844 well illustrates the distressed condition of the samurai class. It reads, in part, as follows:

Numbers of families (of military gentry) have of late suffered from pecuniary difficulties, and various means have been tried

<sup>1</sup> Umetsuji Kisei, *op cit*, pp. 482-484.

<sup>2</sup> "Materials for the Study of Private Law in Old Japan," *op cit*, pt. iii, pp. 1-2.

<sup>3</sup> Yosaburo Takegoshi, *Nissen-gohyaku Nen Shi* (Tokyo, 1921), p. 648.

<sup>4</sup> "Materials for the Study of Private Law in Old Japan," *op cit*, pt. iii, p. 318.



for relieving them; government loans having been made as often as possible. Many are burdened with heavy loads of debt, and would not be able even for years to make payment. The government, therefore, out of compassion for their unfortunate condition, and with the purpose of relieving them from their difficulties, has already decided to change the rule as to government loans, and has ordered that money lent out to them up to the present time from the public treasury may be repaid by instalments covering a number of years. Now the lending and borrowing of money generally has its origin in a private arrangement of the parties, and hence there is no necessity for taking up and adjudging disputes of that sort. Hereafter, therefore, actions for money loans contracted before today are not to be taken up and adjudged; and only those claims which arise in the future are to be taken up and adjudged. Of course this applies also to claims for wages of labor, hire of services, salaries, etc.<sup>1</sup>

Such an embarrassing and distressing situation of the samurai class gave rise to serious discussions. One of the great causes of the poverty of the samurai class was recognized to be extravagance, and many social philosophers urged the daimyos to cut down their expenditures by abolishing all luxuries in their households. But since the families of the daimyos had been so accustomed to the luxury and comfort of the city, it was hard for them to abstain in spite of their debts. As the practice of thrift was found difficult in Yedo, many advocated the return of samurais and daimyos to their native land. In order to cut down the expenditures of the daimyos' households, it was of paramount importance that the system of maintaining the Yedo residences and of traveling back and forth between Yedo and their domains should be abolished or at least modified. As early as the Genroku period (1688-1702) Kumazawa Banzan argued that it was

<sup>1</sup> "Materials for the Study of Private Law in Old Japan," *op. cit.*, pt. iii, p. 389.

not at all necessary for the Shogun to require the daimyos to keep their families in Yedo and that a fifty or sixty days' sojourn every three years would be a sufficient requirement to insure the allegiance of the daimyos to the Shogun.<sup>1</sup> The best way of saving the daimyos from pecuniary difficulties was to place them in the environments where they could get along with little money, many scholars argued. In Yedo, they were obliged to buy even a pair of chop-sticks with money, Ogyu Sorai argued;<sup>2</sup> therefore they had to change rice into money in order to buy their necessities; but if the daimyos lived in the country, they could have their household servants and artisans make most of the things they needed, and they could save all the rice in their storehouses until the townspeople became very eager to buy it. This would put the daimyos in a stronger position than the townspeople. The world had advanced too far, however, for the reinstitution of such a primitive economic life. The families of the daimyos had become too accustomed to town life to go back to the simple life in their rural domains. "There is no more useless thing in the world than the wife of a daimyo," scoffed Ogyu Sorai. "She cannot even sew, a primary requisite for a woman; but she amuses herself by playing *samisen* [a three stringed musical instrument] She will not sleep at night but sleeps in the daytime until four in the afternoon!"<sup>3</sup> The Shoguns, on the other hand, were determined not to change the system which had been handed down from their honorable ancestor. Another reason why the samurais could not return to the land was that most samurais had been receiving their feudal bounties in rice instead of in land since the Genroku period (1688-1702), and had lost the direct connection with any particular piece of

<sup>1</sup> Kumazawa Banzan, *Daigaku Wakumon*, B.J.A.P., vol. i, p. 142.

<sup>2</sup> Ogyu Sorai, *Seidan*, about 1725, B.J.A.P., vol. iii, pp. 360-362.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 497.

land; consequently they had no land to which they might return

The Shogun, who had formerly been so eager to weaken the economic power of the daimyos, now realized that the decline of the samurai class might threaten even the very existence of the Shogunate. So now he attempted to save the fast-falling samurai class. The decline of this class was in part attributed to the low price of rice. The samurai had to sell their rice in order to obtain money; therefore, the higher the price of rice the greater the amount of money they got. But the price of rice always tended to be lower than the prices of other goods. To the daimyos, too good a harvest was unprofitable, as it tended to lower the price, but if harvest was too poor, they had so little rice to sell that even if the price was high, the proceeds were small. Indeed, it was beyond the power of individual daimyos to hold the price of rice at a figure profitable to them. In behalf of the distressed daimyos, the Tokugawa government issued decrees now and then that rice should not be sold by the daimyos and samurais for less than a certain fixed price, or that half of the tax-rice of daimyos should be stored in the storehouses and not shipped to Osaka, when the supply exceeded the demand. This sort of price regulation, however, could never be carried very far, because the Tokugawa government, which had large cities under its jurisdiction, was constantly forced to adopt measures to lower the price of rice when it became threateningly high for the proletarian masses who bought their rice with their wages.

Another method that was tried to relieve the daimyos from their financial distress was the effort to increase the economic productivity of their domains. It was, however, most difficult to increase the productivity of land on account of the scarcity of labor and capital for the opening of new fields or the reclamation of deserted fields. The more progressive

economists like Honda Rimei,<sup>1</sup> therefore, began to advocate that the daimyos should undertake commerce or industry in their domains, and attacked the stupidity and vanity of the samurai class, which had been taking a scornful attitude toward money-making occupations. But such ideas were not popular among the scholars and the rulers who had been imbued with the feudalistic world-view, that had been handed down for many centuries. As late as 1841, Shoji Koki declared, "It is the source of national disaster that the samurai class forgets its own sacred duty and takes up the vulgar and mean business of selling and buying."<sup>2</sup> "It is most dangerous," insisted Matsudaira Sadanobu, the typical statesman of the feudal government, "for the samurai to have the avaricious desire for gaining gold and silver."<sup>3</sup> But time disproved the opinion of these men. All those daimyos who abstained faithfully from taking up new enterprises shared the destiny of the crumbling feudal society. The few daimyos, on the other hand, who defied such traditional views of life and ventured out into a new field not only survived but were an important factor in destroying the old world,—a world which had become incompatible with the rising spirit of the new order.

<sup>1</sup> Honda Rimei, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

<sup>2</sup> Shoji Koki, *op. cit.*, vol. xxiii, p. 183.

<sup>3</sup> Matsudaira Sadanobu, "Sekizen Shu," *Works*, vol. ii.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE ASCENDENCY OF THE MONEYED CLASS

As the samurai class fell further and further in the scale of prosperity and power, the merchant class rose. The emergence of this new moneyed group, however, was a matter of gradual development and involved long suffering on the part of its members. In the feudal society, the merchants formed the lowest of the castes. They had to endure all the insults of the other classes, especially of the samurais, who were at the top of the caste system. The samurai would never associate with the traders, as he believed that the trader would pollute the sacred customs of the samurai class with his avarice and vulgarity. In the self-sufficient economy of the feudal period, the sphere in which the trader moved was also very small, for he dealt only in those things which could not be produced in every district. In fact he was little better than a peddler. But when the circulation of money became more prevalent at the end of the sixteenth century, the trader was able to travel farther and carry more things than before. Especially after the establishment of the Tokugawa Shogunate and the subsequent settlement of the families of the daimyos in Yedo, the traders began to find a great opportunity for prosperity by going up to Yedo or opening shops along the highways of the daimyos' processions from their dominions to Yedo. The daimyos came to find it more convenient to buy most of their provisions on the way instead of carrying them from their distant dominions. During those earlier years of town development, neither the daimyos nor the Shogun had any idea of

taxing the townspeople except by an occasional summons for personal service, because in those days, since the product of the land was considered the sole wealth, the townspeople who produced no rice were exempt from taxation. Thus the greater cities like Kyoto, Yedo, Osaka, Nara, Fushimi and Sakae were all exempt from taxation.<sup>1</sup>

In the meantime, Tokugawa Iyeyasu, the first Shogun of the Tokugawa régime, perceiving the increasing necessity of metal money due to the frequent travelling of the daimyos and the growing complexity of town life, standardized the currency and facilitated circulation by coining several kinds of gold and silver money besides the copper money that had been the chief metal money circulating among the masses. This stimulated the traders and artisans to produce greater and greater quantities of various goods. The samurai class were therefore the greatest possessors of gold and silver, and were tempted to spend their money on novel things. The lavish consumption of the samurai class enabled the merchant class gradually to accumulate money, and already toward the end of the seventeenth century their rising economic status had become noticeable. Their social status, however, remained the same and the samurai class, who began to look askance at the prosperity of the merchant class, endeavored more than ever to humiliate and oppress them. The townspeople were strictly prohibited from dressing like a samurai; even the mode of their hair-dressing was dictated. They were commanded to prostrate themselves on the ground whenever a daimyo or the Shogun passed through the streets. But the policy of the merchant class was that of fawning upon the haughty samurai in order to win their favor. The merchant class endeavored to please the samurai class with frequent gifts and with willing personal service. Whenever a merchant was apprehensive of

<sup>1</sup> Oishi Hisanori, *Jikata Bonrei Roku* (1791-1794), vol. iv.

the disposition of the Shogun toward his trade, he would first go to the magistrate's office and offer an attractive gift of money to the Shogun as he asked for a favor. When a group of merchants wanted to seek profits by excluding outsiders or by monopolizing a commodity, they would also offer a substantial sum of thank-money. Thus by the middle of the eighteenth century, the merchants and the artisans had been organized in some form or another, and their existence as a most powerful element in society could no longer be denied.

With their rise in economic status, the rich merchants attained a higher social standing by being appointed special merchants of the Shogun or the daimyos. These merchants were called *go-yo-shonin*. They supplied the household needs of the lords and very frequently advanced funds to them. For such services they received from the lords various privileges, such as using names of distinction, wearing swords and ceremonial costumes, and freely entering the compounds of the lords. Some merchants who contributed a great deal of money were even made retainers of the lords. Such merchant retainers, like other retainers, received rice stipends, but the amount was very insignificant compared with the money they had given to the lords in exchange for the honor. And yet merchants who were hungry for social distinction did not hesitate to spend a fortune for being counted among a higher class. On the other hand, the hereditary samurais were tired of the meagre means of subsistence which their position involved and hence became willing to sell it for a price. The selling of samurai positions became so prevalent during the administration of Shogun Yoshimune (1716-1735) that he prohibited the practice; but it was of no avail. Title dealing became an open secret.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Katsumi Kuroita, *Kokushi no Kenkyu* (Tokyo, 1918), p. 804.

The rising status of the merchant class was a great menace to the old samurai class. The presence of the sword-wearing merchants became so formidable that as early as 1683 the Shogun prohibited the wearing of swords by *go-yo-shonin* and merchant retainers. The government worked incessantly to keep down the status of the merchant class through a most detailed censorship of the standard of living among the merchants. The Tokugawa government limited the number of *kago*, or palanquins, in the streets of Yedo to three hundred so that the townspeople might not become more ostentatious than the samurai.<sup>1</sup> It did not tolerate even the name of a tradesman which sounded like a daimyo's name.<sup>2</sup> In 1715, the Shogun decreed that no townsman should be allowed to live in the samurai quarters.<sup>3</sup> He even confiscated the property of some merchants whose luxury became too conspicuous. One of the most famous confiscations was that of Yodoya Saburoyemon, the greatest rice merchant of Osaka during the Genroku period (1688-1702). The confiscated property included fifty pairs of gold screens, three toy ships made of jewelry, three hundred and sixty carpets, 10,050 *kin* of liquid gold, two hundred and seventy-three large precious stones and numberless small stones, two chests of gold, three thousand large gold coins, 120,000 *ryo* of *koban*, eighty-five thousand *kwamme* of silver, seventy-five thousand *kwan* of copper money, a hundred and fifty boats, seven hundred and thirty storehouses, seventeen storehouses for jewelry, eighty granaries, eighty storehouses for beans, twenty-eight houses in Osaka, sixty-four houses in other places, a rice stipend from one daimyo amounting to three hundred and thirty-two *koku* and a hundred and fifty *chobu* of cypress forest.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ota Nampo, *Ichwa Ichigen* (1800-1823), vol. xxxx, pp. 32-42.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. xxxvii, pp. 40-42.



Such a confiscation meant a considerable financial gain for the Shogun, but it caused a disturbance in the commercial world. Too frequent confiscations might even endanger the existence of the Shogunate through the spread of discontent. The Shogun, moreover, began to find that the increasing payments of thank-money from the rising merchants was a better source of income than confiscation of the property of a few. As a consequence, toward the middle of the Tokugawa period, there appeared a group of capitalists such as Echigoya, Ebisuya, Kameya, Hamadaya, Daimaru, Yamatoya, Shimaya, etc., who were no longer afraid of the samurai class. They were now the creditors of the samurai class. The daimyos became condescending enough to enter the houses of these merchants to solicit money, while the latter took over the control of the granaries of the former. Thus the time had come when the daimyos trembled at the anger of the merchants, upon whose mercy their subsistence now depended. The capitalist merchants possessed, according to the estimation of Honda Rimei, fifteen-sixteenths of the nation's wealth.<sup>1</sup> It was no longer the daimyos who impressed the world with their sumptuous manner of living. The material glory of the moneyed class had superseded that of the daimyos. Indeed, it does not seem a gross exaggeration to say that a big rice merchant spent as much money for his lunches during a month as a samurai of five hundred *koku* spent for the whole year's living.<sup>2</sup>

Although there were men of such spectacular wealth in the cities, there were in addition numerous retail shopkeepers and day-laborers, who constituted the majority of the town dwellers. While the wholesalers and brokers, by virtue of their wealth, received government charters to organize guilds for the control of the commercial world,

<sup>1</sup> Honda Rimei, *Keisei Hisaku* (1789-1800), B J A.P., vol. xii, p. 78.

<sup>2</sup> *Koji Rui-en*, vol. x, p. 673.

the retail shop-keepers were unorganized and at the mercy of big business men. They were forced to buy certain amounts of commodities from wholesalers at set prices, and they lived on the small income they made by their retail business. Since the guild of wholesalers in any particular commodity had monopolistic control over the trade, they often held their stock from the market for the purpose of raising prices. Sometimes retail shop-keepers were threatened with starvation on account of the lack of stock in their shops. This was particularly the case in the rice trade. In years of dearth, the rice merchants kept rice in their store-houses and would not sell it to the retailers. The retailers were then obliged to shut down their stores, and the price of rice jumped tremendously.

The class that was most badly affected by such jumps in the price of rice was that of the wage-workers, who now constituted the masses of city population. They had to buy rice with the money they earned, but since their wages did not increase with the rise in the price of rice, they had to suffer from dire need. They were not yet sufficiently awake to form an organization to protect their interests; and, moreover, since they were usually unskilled, they wandered about the city and took up any job that would keep them and their families alive. In normal times, therefore, they gained no class consciousness, but when there was a sudden jump in the price of rice and their existence was threatened, they were driven by desperation to become a fearful mob. The high price of rice was ordinarily profitable for the samurai class, who had to sell their tax-rice, and the Tokugawa government endeavored to maintain a high price in order to arrest the decline of the samurai class. But the extraordinarily high price of rice caused such great suffering among the city workers, who led a hand-to-mouth existence, that a serious rebellion was threatened. Hence the

government was obliged to pass legislation from time to time against too great rises in the price of rice. In 1733, between January and May, the government issued several decrees to the effect that all wholesale rice merchants must sell out all their stored rice directly to retailers without its passing through the hands of middlemen, and that if anybody held rice the whole street should accuse him and his rice should be forfeited.<sup>1</sup> In 1735, the government fixed the price of rice to be one *koku* and four *to* per *ryo*.<sup>2</sup> In January, 1784, it was proclaimed that anybody, merchant or otherwise, who held more rice than he needed for his subsistence, should sell it immediately. Two years later there was a nation-wide famine, and many thousands of people starved to death in the rural districts. In Yedo, the price of rice was quoted at a hundred and twenty *ryo* per hundred *hyo*<sup>3</sup> in the beginning of May, 1787, a hundred and sixty *ryo* a few days later, and a hundred and eighty-two *ryo* on the seventeenth of the month. Many restaurants were closed on account of the lack of rice. At last, on the evening of the twentieth, a desperate mob gathered in the streets. The rioters tore down the house of a rich rice merchant in Akasaka. This induced more people to join the mob, and on the twenty-first there arose riots in several districts of Yedo. The rioters marched through the streets and defaced the large houses of the rice merchants and also of other wealthy people. Some business houses like Daimaru were so afraid of the riot that they tried to pacify the mob by offering two big barrels of *sake* (liquor). The mob, however, was not pacified. On the contrary, the number of rioting groups increased on the following day to twenty-four, involving in all five thousand people. They destroyed

<sup>1</sup> *Koji Rui-en*, vol. ix, p. 562

<sup>2</sup> Ota Nampo, *op. cit.*, vol. iii, p. 11.

<sup>3</sup> As a rule, one *hyo* contains 35 *koku*.

forty-seven houses in one day. The government mobilized the samurais of the daimyos and ordered them to kill all the rioters, while it carried out relief for pacifists and survivors by appropriating twenty thousand *ryo* and sixty thousand *ryo* of rice<sup>1</sup>

Not only Yedo but all the other large cities suffered from such riots. In Kyoto, Osaka, Sakae, Kanagawa, Kumamoto, etc., there were uprisings of hunger-stricken mobs. Especially in Osaka the damage was most serious, involving the destruction of more than two hundred houses of capitalists during the two days between the tenth and the twelfth of May, 1787.<sup>2</sup> In 1837, too, there was a dismal rebellion of the poor led by Oshio Heihachiro, a distinguished scholar. He saw on all sides the heart-rending sufferings of the poor, while in their midst were a few rich people who seemed to possess all the good things in the world. Heihachiro sold his most cherished library and saved the lives of more than ten thousand people; yet there were still hundreds of thousands of hungry men and women and children. His sympathy with the poor and deep resentment against the rich finally led him to champion a furious revolt against conditions. He led his disciples into Osaka in February, 1837, and set fire to the city. The fight was bitter, but finally the rebels were defeated by the government army, and Heihachiro was obliged to take flight. When he was sought out in March, he killed himself with his own sword. Thus in the period when the struggle between the merchant class and the samurai class was scarcely ended, there was already evidence of the beginnings of a struggle between the capitalists and the wage-earners, a struggle which has been growing in scope and intensity ever since.

<sup>1</sup> Ota Nampo, *op. cit.*, vol. vii, pp. 8-13, vol. xxvii, pp. 9-11

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. vii, pp. 8-9

## CHAPTER VII

### THE DISINTEGRATION OF THE OLD FAMILY SYSTEM

IN an analysis of the family system of feudal Japan, it must be kept in mind throughout that the samurai class and the peasant class lived in entirely different worlds politically, socially and economically. The nature of the family system in the two classes is thus so different that the subject seems best considered in two sections, in which the samurais and the peasants are treated separately.

First, let us take the samurai class. In the Tokugawa period there were about two hundred and sixty daimyos, who held their fiefs on the condition that they should remain loyal vassals to the Shogun. Each of these daimyos had as his retainers numerous samurais, who received either land or rice stipends from their respective daimyos for their faithful services. The family of a samurai or a daimyo consisted of his wife and children and any number of relatives who were living in his house. A strict order prevailed in the positions of the members of the family. The head of the family, i. e., the daimyo or the samurai himself, had absolute authority in his family; but when the retired father of the head of the house was still living, his will must be done first. Next to the head of the house came his oldest son, who was the heir to the entire family property. He was seated above all other sons, and he was brought up to become the worthy successor to his honorable father. All the other members of the family were ranked according to their age; many duties and forms of etiquette of the samurai family being strictly observed as between the members.

Since all the inheritance of the family went to one successor of the family line, the younger sons had to seek their fortunes independently. Some of them found favor with the daimyos and were granted fiefs or rice stipends, thus establishing themselves as the heads of independent families. Many of them were adopted by heirless families and succeeded to their family names and property, while others stayed on in the houses of their eldest brothers.

In the samurai family, the wife was held to have only one function, the raising of offspring. Sterility was, therefore, legitimate ground on which a husband could divorce his wife or take a concubine, occasionally the wife even advised her husband to bring a concubine into the family. The first son born to the concubine was treated most respectfully as the heir of the house, but the position of his mother was no higher than that of a servant. Shortly after birth, the son was taken away from the mother and placed in the hands of a specially appointed nurse in order that he might be brought up with all the dignity pertaining to an heir of a samurai family; while the mother continued to be a household servant, and was even required to address her own son with all the formalities that pertained to relations between master and servant.

The provisions for adoption did not exist at the beginning of the Tokugawa period, therefore if an heirless samurai would not take a concubine or if his concubine failed to give him a son, the samurai family forfeited its land and family name to the over-lord. This sort of forfeiture was practised quite freely by the earlier Shoguns so that they might increase land under their direct control and thereby increase their power. According to Dr. Nakamura, between Keicho VI (1601) and Keian IV (1651), about sixty-one feudal families lost their fiefs due to the lack of heirs, a loss amounting to 5,179,000 *koku*, and six houses

lost a greater part of their fiefs, amounting to 84,000 *koku*.<sup>2</sup> In 1615, however, it was made possible for a feudal lord to adopt an heir from among his relatives of the same family name, and this law and the prohibition of "death-bed adoption," i. e., the adoption of an heir at the death-bed of the head of a house, was strictly enforced.<sup>3</sup> But this enforcement had many undesirable effects from the point of view of the feudal lords. In the first place, the adoption of an heir was impossible in case there was no suitable man among those who bore the same family name; and in the second place, the prohibition of death-bed adoption caused much distress when the head of the house was attacked with a sudden illness before he had chosen his heir. In this event, the heirless family lost its feudal stipend, and all the dependents of the house, including many attendant samurais, were deprived of their livelihood and swelled the class of gentleman-wanderers, called *ronin* (literally, men of waves). They had no longer a particular lord to serve, there was no economic security in their life; yet they were too proud to earn their living by manual labor. Thus they lost their place in the social structure and were constantly watching for an opportunity to turn the world upside down in order to realize a better day for themselves. The attitude of the Tokugawa government toward these *ronins* was that of strict suppression. They made no attempt to get at the root of the difficulty, and as a result the atmosphere of unrest grew thicker and thicker until it finally led to a serious conspiracy. Toward the middle of the seventeenth century, Yui Shosetsu headed a group of *ronins* in an attempt to overthrow the Shogunate. Their plot was discovered and they were

<sup>1</sup>Koya Nakamura, *Kokumin Bunka Shi Gairon* (Tokyo, 1924), vol. ii, p. 39.

<sup>2</sup>Nobushige Hozumi, *Ancestor Worship and Japanese Law* (Tokyo, 1912), p. 158.

promptly and ruthlessly punished. This incident made such a deep impression upon the Tokugawas as well as upon the public that in Keian IV (1651) an important modification was made in the law of adoption. According to the amended law, it was made permissible to adopt a son of a different family name in case there was no suitable person of the same name. This amendment is said to have been justified on the ground that all Japanese were of kindred blood, but the real meaning of the amendment was that it was a concession of the Tokugawa Shogun to those vassals who had been resentful about the Tokugawas' despotic policy of concentration of land. An amendment was also made to the law against death-bed adoption. Although this was prohibited ordinarily, the adoption of an heir at the last moment was made permissible if the dying man was under fifty years of age—the validity of such adoption to be determined according to the circumstances of each case<sup>1</sup>. When such an adopted heir was a near relative of the family, he took in a wife from outside. In cases where there was a daughter in a family with no male heir, it was provided that she might take in a husband, who later was converted into a legal son to inherit the house. This method of adoption was called *muko-yoshi*, or the adoption of the son-in-law as heir. These laws of adoption remained substantially the same for more than two hundred years; that is, until the end of the Tokugawa régime.

To a samurai nothing was so threatening as the loss of his fief. So long as he had a fief, he had all the social prestige connected with his family name, but once he lost it, he became a wandering samurai, and his family was deprived of means of subsistence. The daimyos were therefore very careful to avoid everything that was offensive to the Shogun. The Shogun, on the other hand, used every means to

<sup>1</sup> Koya Nakamura, *op. cit.*, vol. ii, p. 39.



weaken the daimyos and watched for every opportunity to increase his own power. One of the means that he used was to make the whole family responsible for the guilt of one of its members. If the head of a family had committed a crime, the members of his family were punished according to the degrees of relationship to the head. If one of the sons had committed a crime, all the other members of the family, including the head of the house, were punished. And in all such cases, their feudal stipends or fiefs were wholly or partially forfeited. It was, therefore, most important to protect and safeguard the house by eliminating any member who might endanger it. Hence the institution of *kwando* (disinheritance) and *kyuri* (alienation), through which the entire relationship of the disinherited or the alienated was cut away, no matter how closely connected he might be in blood. The outlaw was reported to the officer of the feudal court and his name was taken out of his family registry forever. This was so freely practised during the Tokugawa period that Yamakata Hoshu attributed to it the increasing number of highway robbers and indolent people, and he advocated that the disinherited or the alienated should be marked either by having their thumbs cut or having their foreheads tattooed.<sup>1</sup> It is not known whether his suggestion was actually carried out or not, but it at least shows the prevalence of such dissociated elements in society.

While this rigid family system prevailed among the samurai class, there was no systematized code of family relations among the peasants. In those days, law was never clearly differentiated from ethics, and the feudal government issued various proclamations concerning the social affairs of the people, in which the penalties of law were stated together with moral teachings. It is through such proclamations as

<sup>1</sup>Yamakata Hoshu, *Yume no Shiro*, about 1820, B.J.A.P., vol. xxv, p. 299.

well as through the contemporary writings of various kinds that one may study the condition of the peasant family in feudal Japan.

The peasant family was not always limited to a man and wife and their children, but might include any number of relatives besides the immediate family. Makabe Yoshu explained that according to *Den-en* one peasant house meant a family of six persons, i. e., a man who supported five persons was considered as a full house owner.<sup>1</sup> Miyazaki Anteï also spoke of an average family as composed of five or seven.<sup>2</sup> Again, we find in *Ichirwa Ichigen* a few descriptions of families composed of a man and his wife and their children.<sup>3</sup> But more often, a family included, besides the wife and children of the head of the house, his widowed mother, his unmarried sisters and brothers, and sometimes even married brothers and uncles together with their respective wives and children. Moreover, if the head of the family succeeded to the headship on account of the abdication (*inkyo*) of his father, the house might include the father and even the grandfather. Thus the constitution of a peasant family varied greatly, and there was no statute that decided who should be included in a house; only it was customary to recognize as one family a group of relatives represented by one peasant who was registered as a regular tenant of the Shogun or a daimyo.

The economic basis of each family was land, as in the case of the samurai family. Each peasant family was attached to a piece of land, which was cultivated from one generation to another. Since it was the lord who had the right to the produce of the land, each peasant family sub-

<sup>1</sup> Makabe Yoshu, *Chiri Sairon Shu*, 1759, B J.A.P., vol. xiv, p. 180.

<sup>2</sup> Miyazaki Anteï, *Nogyo Zensho*, 1696, vol. xi, p. 99.

<sup>3</sup> Ota Nampo, *Ichirwa Ichigen* (1800-1823), vol. vii, p. 41.

sisted on whatever was left after the lord collected all the tax due from the land. Each peasant family was an organic part of a village community. A village community of feudal Japan constituted a unit of taxation, and to the eyes of the ruler, it was little more than a tax-producing organism, of which each family was only a part. Not only in paying taxes, but also for criminal offences committed by the villagers, there was communal responsibility, so that the conduct of each family had vital consequences in regard to the village community as a whole. It was natural, therefore, that the company of five<sup>1</sup> and the entire village community should have had a considerable degree of control over the domestic affairs of individual families. Quarrels between husband and wife were often settled by the intervention of the company of five. An abused wife often found a refuge among her neighbors; and when her husband came to claim her, the company returned her to him on the condition that he would be gentle to her. But if the offence was repeated, the man was reported to the chief of the companies or else he was threatened with ostracism, which usually brought him to terms.<sup>2</sup>

Succession to the headship of a family and disposition of the family property were interfered with not only by the relatives but by the company of five or sometimes by the whole village. Succession to the headship had to be recognized not only by the relatives, but by the company of five to which the family belonged. Since primogeniture was of minor consideration compared with the fitness of a man to maintain the economic status of the family and to contribute to the welfare of the village community, the head of a house usually chose an heir through the consultation with the rela-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *supra*, ch. i.

<sup>2</sup> "Materials for the Study of Private Law in Old Japan," *Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan*, vol. xx, suppl., pt. i, p. 78.

tives and the company of five. When a man died without an appointed heir, the council of relatives appointed one upon the approval of the company of five; but even if a man had left a will it might or might not be recognized by the relatives and the company. For the transfer of the title of headship, application was made to the feudal lord under the joint signature of the family concerned and the company chief. It was often the case, furthermore, that if the head of a house offended the whole village for any reason, the village officials had a right to force him to abdicate.

The distribution of patrimony also required the approval of the relatives and the company. Although a man had a right to make a will with regard to the distribution of inheritance, when the provisions of the will were ambiguous or unjust the relatives and the company had a right to disregard the will and make a proper distribution. In general, a will was not valid unless it was opened in the presence of the relatives, the company and the beneficiaries, and was publicly announced. When a man wished to portion off his land to his daughter or to a younger brother or son, thereby establishing a branch house, he was expected to consult the relatives and the company. In some villages the consent of all the villagers was required in such a case, and a new householder was obliged to pay three to five *yen* to the village as "face money" or *menkin*, which was applied to community expenses. Very often, however, a peasant divided his land among several sons without setting them up as separate houses. In this case, the younger sons were called *funzuke hyakusho* (apportioned peasants); that is to say, they had their own pieces of land to work on, but they were not registered as independent peasants. They had their private households so far as their daily living was concerned, but they paid their taxes under the name of their oldest brother, who was registered as the head of a regular peasant

family. A peasant who possessed less than ten *koku* worth of land was absolutely prohibited from establishing a branch house by portioning off a part of his land to a relative. This was frequently evaded, but both the government and the village community endeavored to enforce the prohibition strictly. A proclamation of Kyoho VII (1722) states.

A peasant who has less than ten *koku* or one *chobu*<sup>1</sup> is prohibited from portioning off his land. This law was proclaimed several times in the past, but there have been many transactions secretly carried on. From now on, only the surplus of the house property over ten *koku* may be portioned off. A peasant who has less than ten *koku* is strictly prohibited from dividing up his land under any circumstances. Those dependent on him, therefore, should work with him on the farm or should be sent out to serve others.<sup>2</sup>

Man-o Tokiharu, a scholar in the province of the lord of Tamba, taught:

The farmer who has less than ten *koku* should not divide up his land among his sons. . . . If the land should be divided up, each portion would produce so little that each son would suffer from scanty provisions, and they would all be reduced to the status of water-drinking farm laborers. It is for this reason that the division of land into too small portions has come to connote foolishness.<sup>3</sup>

In a society whose unit was a family instead of an individual, it was natural that individuals were controlled by ethical teachings that were conducive to the prosperity and perpetuity of the family, upon which the subsistence of indi-

<sup>1</sup>One *chobu* (=2.45 acres) is an area that was estimated to produce ten *koku* of rice; one *koku* equals 5.12 bushels.

<sup>2</sup>Oishi Hisanori, *Jikata Bonrei Roku* (1791-1794), vol. vii.

<sup>3</sup>Man-o Tokiharu, *Kwan-no Kohonroku*, 1725, vol. ii, p. 16.

viduals so inevitably depended. "Be loyal to thy lord and be filial to thy parents" is the commandment of the Japanese ethical code, but at no time was it emphasized so strongly as in the Tokugawa period. The Chinese philosophy of ancestor worship, too, never gained such an overwhelming popularity as in this period. In ancient Japan, ancestor worship was mystical rather than ethical, having its origin in the foundation of the empire by Amaterasu Omikami; it was the great unifying force in the life of the Japanese. But when the institution of private property was securely established, ancestor worship began to have an ethical and philosophical meaning. It is true that even in the feudal age there persisted the idea that the entire land in the country was the sacred inheritance of the Mikado, who was the direct descendant of Amaterasu Omikami; but so long as a man was faithful to his over-lord, his land remained his exclusive possession for all practical purposes, a possession which he could hand down to his descendants. The justification for the perpetuation of his property came to be sought in the belief that it was the will of his illustrious ancestor to perpetuate his family and also the duty of his descendants to obey him. Hence the teaching that the son ought to be filial to his father as the father to the grandfather, and so on to the ancestor. Scholars of Chinese classics wrote many books during the Tokugawa period, exalting the virtue of filial piety. Indeed, as Miyazaki Anteï taught, filial piety was the foundation of all knowledge, without which one could never discern the deep meaning of humanity.<sup>1</sup>

The feudal government found the teachings of the scholars to be very useful and generously listened to their advice with regard to administration and social legislation. From time to time, the government issued proclamations with

<sup>1</sup> Miyazaki Anteï, *op. cit.*, Introduction, p. 1.

regard to the right conduct of their subjects, and these were read to the congregations of peasants on festival occasions or posted on the intersections of the fields. As an example, let us take the proclamation of February 26, Keian II (1649). It runs as follows:

Be filial to thy parents. The first precept of filial piety is to keep thyself healthy. It is especially pleasing to parents if thou refrain from drinking and quarrelling, and love thy younger brother and obey thy elder brother. If thou hold to the above principle, blessings of gods and Buddha will be upon thee, and thou mayst walk in the right path and thy land shall bring forth good harvests. On the other hand, if thou become indulgent and lazy, thou wilt become poor and broken, and finally resort to stealing. Then the law shall overtake thee and bind thee with rope and put thee in a cage, and perhaps hang thee. If such a thing happens, how heart-broken thy parents must be! Moreover, thy wife and children and brothers must all suffer punishment because of thy crime.<sup>1</sup> It is, therefore, very important that thou keep thyself straight and industrious day and night. If thou become well-to-do, thou canst build a good house and dress and eat as thou wilt. Even if thou become wealthy the officials shall not be exacting, as this is a peaceful time, nor shall anybody snatch away thy possession. So thy offsprings will live comfortably even in famine years, for thou canst give them thy stored grain. Indeed, the farmer has the securest kind of life if only he pays his tax regularly. Keep, therefore, the above precept always in thy mind and teach thy sons and grandsons to be ever industrious.<sup>2</sup>

While filial piety was the religion of the family, solidarity and cooperation was the creed of its members. In those days, the property of individual members was not recog-

<sup>1</sup> A family was made responsible for a criminal offence of any of its members.

<sup>2</sup> *Koji Rui-en* (Tokyo, 1908), vol. i, pp. 196-197.

nized, for the land was the communal possession of the family. The members contributed their labor for the cultivation of the land and what they produced jointly they enjoyed together. Hence it was most essential that the members of the family should keep together and cooperate with one another in order to secure the means of subsistence. Since the family produced most of the necessities themselves, some task was allotted to each member of the family except the very aged or the invalid or the infant. Even the child could help by pulling the weeds out of the rice-field, collecting eggs, etc. It was the task of the young daughter to plant the rice seedlings in the spring. Besides helping in the fields, the women spin and wove in order to clothe the whole family. A filial son was never supposed to go away from his home, when he could help his father. Even the religious aspiration of individuals was crushed when it was injurious to the welfare and solidarity of the family group. The radical exponents of the Chinese sage, to whom the present life was more real than the future, attacked the pious devotion of the people to Buddha, denying all the teachings of Buddha as the illusions of barbarians. They argued that it was the foremost duty of man to worship the parents who had actually given him his flesh and blood, and to work hard with his brothers in order to increase the inheritance of the family.<sup>1</sup> Filial piety, family solidarity and family cooperation, then, were the categorical imperatives of family life, which were destined to hold a firm

<sup>1</sup> "There is no such thing as paradise. This is a false belief and it has no foundation whatsoever. But foolish people believe it and imagine that there is a real paradise in the western part of the universe. They are charmed to hear of the exquisite and beautiful life of tranquility and comfort, and in order to be born to that country next time they give up all their possessions and vocations. They even desert their families and native places, and they become disciples of Buddha. What a deplorable thing this is!" Yamakata Hoshu, *op cit.*, pp. 438-439.



grip upon the consciences of every person born into a family group during the feudal period.

But even this time-honored family system began to show signs of disintegration in the later Tokugawa period. The legislators and moral philosophers of the time thought it an unpardonable sin for the people to slight or disturb the order of the family, which was the sacred heritage of their ancestors. Their desperate efforts, however, to preserve the family system were of little avail against the great forces that were transforming the whole economic and social system.

In commercial towns, which were rapidly developing, the demand for labor was limitless. The poor agricultural people, who were finding it harder and harder to support large families,<sup>1</sup> began to send their children to be apprentices or servants in the houses of thriving merchants. The term of apprenticeship was generally ten years, during which they were fed and clothed by the masters, while their parents received small sums of money for the contract. When they had finished the term of apprenticeship, they might return to their parents or might continue to serve their masters for money wages; but the majority of them chose the latter plan and never went back to their native villages, where they would have to toil in the fields—a prospect which did not seem very bright. If they stayed in town they could live on their money wages and might hope to make a fortune. In big commercial houses, it was the custom to institute a faithful servant, who had served ten or fifteen years, as the head of a new branch of the master's firm. He was then allowed to use the trade-mark of his master, who had already established his reputation, and thus got a good start in his business. A kind master sometimes gave a share of his capital to his servant, and even procured a wife for him.

<sup>1</sup> *Cf. supra*, ch. v.

But even those men who did not succeed in becoming regular merchants or tradesmen preferred to be day-laborers in town rather than to remain in the village like beasts of burden. For these unskilled laborers in Yedo, there was established toward the end of the seventeenth century an employment office consisting of four townsmen appointed by the town-magistrate. All the day-laborers were required to receive a license at the office and were placed at various temporary tasks such as transportation and road repairing. Although the wages of these unskilled laborers are not known at present, the fact that they could pay the thank-money of twenty-four *mon* (later thirty *mon*) of copper money per month to the employment office shows that they could get along comfortably on their wages except at times when there was a sudden jump in the price of rice. Thus masses of young people in the villages were driven into the towns. They no more regretted breaking away from their families than throwing away old shoes, as Dazai Shundai expressed it.<sup>1</sup> This tendency was regretted deeply by the moral philosophers and legislators as a menace to the family system. They tried to check the townward drift by various teachings and legislations such as exalting filial piety and decreeing the return of town laborers to their native villages, but such efforts were in vain.

As more and more avenues of work opened up for those who left their village homes, the family became less and less significant as an economic unit. Many of the industries of the home were taken over by the artisans, who now produced for the market. In olden times, women spun and wove cloth for the use of their own families. In some districts, women were engaged in the textile industry in winter when there was little to do in the fields. The product was sold in markets and fairs which were held in the vicinity of

<sup>1</sup> Dazai Shundai, *Keizai Roku*, 1729, B.J.A.P., vol. vi, p. 243

their villages. In the later Tokugawa period, however, spinning and weaving became a distinct industry. On account of accessibility to raw materials and geographical advantages, the silk industry was localized in Kyoto, Kiryu, Isezaki, Hino, Fukushima, etc., while the cotton industry was localized in Satsuma, Iyo, Kurume, Kokura, Echigo, etc. In these places, women were hired by clothiers for money wages. Already in the later Tokugawa period, there was in Kyoto a group of what might be called factory girls. They were termed *oriko*, or "weaving girls". But in most places the women were hired to do the work in their own homes. They were supplied with materials and brought back the finished product to the clothiers in exchange for wages. The exact wages they received are not known, but they were considered very high compared with the returns the workers got from farm labor, as may be judged from the following proclamation of the government:

Recently farm laborers have become very scarce and therefore very costly. Especially the so-called weaving women get extraordinarily high wages. This is going the wrong way. It is a great mistake for a peasant to take up such an occupation and neglect the fundamental one. It is the strict order of the government, therefore, that the peasants should understand that their calling is very different from that of the traders, who aim at temporary gains, and that they should have no other thought than caring for their respective fields with all their might.<sup>1</sup>

The development of the textile industry made it less and less necessary for most women to learn how to spin and weave—an ability which used to be a primary requisite for a good wife. The first Shogun, Iyeyasu, had taught his subjects to choose wives who were expert weavers. In those early days a bride was expected to show her skill in weaving. In some provinces it was the custom for a bride to be

<sup>1</sup> *Koji Rui-en*, *op. cit.*, vol. vi, p. 9.

returned to her home with a load of cotton thread. When she came back to her husband's house a fortnight or so later, she had to present him with a dress made out of the thread that she had taken with her. When it became easier to buy cloth from traders, most women were freed from such a standard; although many social thinkers regretted the change, saying that women were getting so lazy that they would not even weave.

Not only spinning and weaving but dying also had been a woman's occupation before the penetration of the money economy. Toward the beginning of the eighteenth century, however, the industry passed out of the hands of the women almost completely. Guilds of dyers arose in towns. Moreover, many kinds of dyes were invented by the new artisans, and many new patterns were put on the market. Even sewing was no longer held to be an occupation of women exclusively, as there appeared expert tailors in the towns, of which Ota Nampo remarked: "Now-a-days, a man can buy his belt ready made out of a heavy material. Just as there are now very few women who make coats at home, so very soon the time will come when no more women will sew men's belts in their homes."<sup>1</sup>

During this period, the artisan class was being differentiated into many groups. Already in the Genroku period (1688-1703), there were more than a hundred and thirty kinds of handicrafts, and various craft guilds had arisen in the large towns.<sup>2</sup> As men came to identify their economic interests with such guilds, they became less and less attached to their ancestral homes. In olden times, the family land was the sole source of income and support for the family. But now the members of the family were able to choose their own occupations and so to support themselves, and

<sup>1</sup> Ota Nampo, *op. cit.*, vol. xvii, p. 5

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *supra*, ch. iii.

hence they were growing more indifferent toward the system of adoption. In case there was no son in a family to inherit the family name, the members of the family divided the property among themselves. This tendency was slow to appear in the villages, where land was still the main property of the family; and yet the increasing transactions in land in the later Tokugawa period<sup>1</sup> show that the peasants were parting with their ancestral land more and more willingly. In towns, where the family property consisted chiefly of money, the people were certainly growing indifferent toward the perpetuation of the family line. Their property, unlike land, was of the owner's own making and so had no family tradition. The members of the family had no such reverent and mystical attitude toward money as had prevailed toward land. Moreover, the commercial world was so unstable that it tended to make the perpetuation of family property a matter of chance. One family might keep its line through many generations by successful management of its business; but it was just as likely that the family would lose all its money through wrong speculation, in which case there was nothing left for the successor to inherit. "It is very rare for a merchant family to last for many generations," observed Tsutsumi Masatoshi, "but there are many families in the villages that are several hundred years old."<sup>2</sup> "There is no evil greater than the lack of an heir to the family," said Shoji Koki, "but now-a-days there is only one in ten families among the masses that adopts an heir, although among the samurai class more than half of the childless families adopt their heirs."<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, the younger sons were getting less and less inclined to be adopted. In olden times, when most of the family property

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *supra*, ch. v.

<sup>2</sup> Tsutsumi Masatoshi, *Shodo Kyuhen*, B.J.A.P., vol. xx, p. 535.

<sup>3</sup> Shoji Koki, *Keizai Mondo Hiroku*, 1841, B.J.A.P., vol. xxii, p. 151.

went down to the successor in the family line and when agriculture was practically the only occupation, the younger sons could never become richer than their oldest brother who was the head of the ancestral family, unless they were adopted by childless families which were more wealthy than their own families. Hence it was considered a better fortune for a younger son to become an adopted heir than to stay in his brother's home as a dependent. But now opportunities were being opened up for younger sons to build up their own fortunes, for they no longer needed land or even houses of their own in order to earn their living and live respectably. Around 1840, Shoji Koki tells us,<sup>1</sup> there were in Osaka more than 122,000 families, of which only 18,000 owned their own houses; and yet they were engaged in all other types of occupations and could support their families comfortably. Yamakata Hoshu also tells us that in the towns there sprang up many families which were much more prosperous than their ancestral houses. Hence the economic significance of the main family often became so diminished that the younger sons came to detest being adopted.<sup>2</sup>

As the family property came to consist of money, the division of inheritance became easier. Even in the feudal period, the division of patrimony was allowed with some limitations, as explained above. The division of land, however, was not so easy as that of money. Furthermore, since land was used only for agriculture, it was more profitable for the several sons to stay with their main family and take communal responsibility over the property than to become independent peasants with small pieces of land. The matter became quite different when money came to constitute the essential part of family property. Unlike the case of land, not all members of a family wanted to use money in the

<sup>1</sup> Shoji Koki, *Keizai Mondo Hiroku*, 1841, B.J.A.P., vol. xxii, p. 485

<sup>2</sup> Yamakata Hoshu, *op. cit.*, p. 280.

same way, because the differentiation of occupations afforded many ways of investing money profitably. Thus in towns, the division of inheritance came to be practised quite freely. "In the night of mourning, one eye weeps for the departed, while the other eye stealthily glances over the property of the deceased," runs a famous satirical *hokku* (a seventeen-syllabled poem of the period) sharply disclosing the psychology of the money-mad townspeople at that time. Men came to quarrel more and more over the division of inheritance. As Raku-o Ko observed:

In the present age, there are few families which have not appealed to the court as the result of dispute over the shares of inheritance. Even among those families which have not gone into court, there are very few in which the relatives enjoy harmonious relations. This is due to the loosening of customary relations in the family and the increase of selfishness and avarice.<sup>1</sup>

When men took up different lines of work and earned money incomes, they acquired a consciousness of personal possessions apart from their families. They no longer identified their economic interest with that of their relatives, as each family pursued its own interest. "They are too stingy to spend even half a *sen* [= ten *mon* of copper money] for their poor relatives," said Tsutsumi Masatoshi.<sup>2</sup> "People are getting so avaricious," Shoji Koki also wrote, "that relatives and friends quarrel over such a trifle as ten *sen*. A man refuses to buy anything from his brother's store, if he can get it even three *mon* cheaper in other stores."<sup>3</sup> Since communal responsibility in regard to land did not apply to money, individuals could not only spend their money as they wanted but could even contract

<sup>1</sup> Matsudaira Sadanobu, "Shoyu Ron," *Works*, vol. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Tsutsumi Masatoshi, *op. cit.*, p. 482.

<sup>3</sup> Shoji Koki, *op. cit.*, vol. xxiii, p. 47.

debts in their own names. Even the courts inclined to treat as individuals those who brought up money actions. When the plaintiff asked the court to make the relatives of the defendant responsible for the debt, the court generally refused to do so.

When the economic condition of the time necessitated the breaking-up of the family into several lines of occupation and the scattering of its members to various places, the teaching of filial piety became less and less practicable. Many sons and daughters left their aged parents in the village despite the teaching that a filial son should never travel far while his parents were still living. The tendency of the young people towards the pursuit of their own personal interests regardless of their parents made Shiba Kokan utter the desperate words, "Ah, it is altogether better not to have children at all in the modern age!"<sup>1</sup> The teaching of solidarity among brothers could not keep its firm grip upon those who had different interests to pursue, and hence many lawsuits were brought before the magistrates as the result of family quarrels. All these evils, most ethical teachers believed, were due to the slackening of moral teachings and the lack of incentive for right living. They proposed, therefore, that the government should give rewards to filial sons and daughters, obedient daughters-in-law, etc. In fact, many feudal lords and the Shogun actually gave rewards to such worthy people. A farmer was sometimes awarded a name of distinction and the privilege of wearing a sword as a reward for his great filial piety.<sup>2</sup> Kamizawa Teikan tells us that in Yedo, on the seventeenth of March, 1791, one man was awarded seven sheets of silver, and twenty-seven men and three women were awarded five sheets of silver each because of their filial piety. Ota Nampo's<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Shiba Kokan, *Shumparo Hikki*, 1811, B.J.A.P., vol. xii, p. 306.

<sup>2</sup> Oishi Hisanori, *op. cit.*, vol. vii.

<sup>3</sup> Kamizawa Teikan, *Okina Gusa*, 1776, vol. xx, p. 8.



*Ichijwa Ichigen* also abounds with examples of filial sons and daughters who were publicly rewarded. Yet all the endeavors of the government and the moralists were quite fruitless. The family could not be restored to its state of filial piety and solidarity. It was not the slackening of moral teachings that produced the condition so lamented by the ethical leaders of the time; rather, the invasion of money into the family called forth new attitudes and brought new opportunities which undermined the old system at its very roots—the family.

Another reflection of the tendency of the family to disintegrate was the growth of prostitution in all commercial towns. Men financially distressed sold their daughters, or sometimes even their wives, into prostitution. "Formerly, women were greatly ashamed of selling themselves to houses of ill-fame, and parents thought it a gross disgrace to sell their daughters on account of poverty," writes Shoji Koki. "But now in all places where there are houses of prostitution, people sell their daughters, and if their new-born babies are fair daughters, they are a cause for rejoicing as the blessing of the gods. In Nagasaki, I have heard that all the present prostitutes are natives of the town."<sup>1</sup> The Tokugawa government legalized the institution, and allowed the business to be carried on within certain licensed districts. In Yedo, there were over 2,500 prostitutes in 1788.<sup>2</sup> Besides this group, there arose also a class of dancing girls, whose business it was to entertain men at their feasts. As time went on, the number of houses of prostitution increased so much that many people began to open new houses outside the licensed districts. According to Professor Takegoshi, there were toward the beginning of the nineteenth century over 4,180 unlicensed prostitutes in a district

<sup>1</sup> Shoji Koki, *op. cit.*, vol. xxii, p. 241.

<sup>2</sup> Ota Nampo, *op. cit.*, vol. vii, p. 12.

twenty-three streets.<sup>1</sup> "There are more houses of prostitution, questionable inns and tea-rooms than I can count!" declared Yamakata Hoshu: and he added, "Ah, shame on us! What would foreigners say if they saw such conditions?"<sup>2</sup> Thereupon, the government began a strict censorship of illegal prostitution. When the town magistrate discovered an inn or a tea-room keeping unlicensed prostitutes, he ordered the place to be shut down. Sometimes a more severe magistrate punished a whole street in which an illegal house had been discovered. In June, 1790, there was a city-wide hunt for unlicensed prostitutes in Kyoto, and within one night over two thousand women were arrested.<sup>3</sup> Sometimes the proprietors of illegal houses were imprisoned with their hands chained together, and all their property was confiscated. But at other times the government officials were easily bribed and the law was not strictly enforced. It was, moreover, too great a temptation for the financially distressed government to refuse the thank-money which such houses were constantly offering in order to be allowed to go on with their business. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, therefore, the prevalence of illegal prostitution was so great in all large towns that it became impossible to remove the evil all at once. Hence some indirect methods were proposed to abolish the system. Yamakata Hoshu suggested as a reform measure that houses of prostitution should be taxed very heavily and the revenue used to help any proprietor of an illegal house who wanted to go out of the business and start over again in a decent occupation. The amount of the tax he had been paying was to be borne by the remaining men until the burden of taxation should become so heavy that finally the owners of such houses

<sup>1</sup> Yosaburo Takegoshi, *Nisen-gohyaku Nen Shu* (Tokyo, 1921), p. 687.

<sup>2</sup> Yamakata Hoshu, *op. cit.*, p. 346.

<sup>3</sup> Kamizawa Teikan, *op. cit.*, vol. xviii, pp. 56-59.

could no longer maintain themselves in the business.<sup>1</sup> But unfortunately such a measure was not practicable in an age when the profits of the business were as great as they were at that time, even heavy taxation and occasional punishment were powerless to prevent the carrying-on of such a fruitful enterprise.

Compared with the family system among the masses, the family system in the samurai class was much slower to show signs of disintegration. In spite of the fact that the samurais realized that the economic value of their land was diminishing year by year, their ideas and actions in regard to other callings proved much less flexible than those of the peasants. Consequently, the loosening of the family bonds came much more gradually than in the peasant class—when it came at all. This certainly was a great check to the disintegration of the family system.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that the character of the samurai family was greatly deteriorated by the invasion of a new source of power—money. Samurai families who were economically ruined began to seek alliances with rich merchants who craved social distinctions. Thus arrangements for adoption and marriage began to be made between samurai families and merchant families on the basis of large dowries from the latter. Matsudaira Sadanobu regretted this tendency as a source of disintegration of the family system, on the grounds that a wife with a large dowry was apt to be so proud that she became unmanageable and might even domineer over her husband.<sup>3</sup> He discussed various social evils that resulted from the institution of dowry. First of all,

<sup>1</sup> Yamakata Hoshu, *op. cit.*, p. 343.

<sup>2</sup> Shoji Koki, *op. cit.*, p. 151: "... now-a-days, there is only one in ten families among the masses that adopts an heir, although among the samurai class, more than half of the childless families adopt heirs."

<sup>3</sup> Matsudaira Sadanobu, "Naniwaye," *Works*, vol. 1.

the arrangement of marriage between a samurai and a daughter from a lower rank with a great deal of money is detrimental to the samurai family, because a wife without samurai culture would tend to spoil the noble tradition of the samurai; second, a samurai of small means cannot marry his daughter into a good family, in which case, the daughter is obliged to remain unmarried—a situation which degrades sex morality; third, a younger son of a family, who might be adopted into an heirless family, cannot do so unless he has a dowry—and consequently he remains unmarried and resorts to houses of prostitution. As the remedy for these evils, the author suggested that the custom of taking husbands or wives on the basis of the dowry should be prohibited by law, in order that men and women should not miss the right time for marriage. Such suggestions bore no fruit, however, and the practice of marrying for the dowry became more and more prevalent as time went on.

After the Meiji revolution, with the abolition of feudalism, the privileges of the samurai class—such as wearing swords and receiving feudal bounties—were taken away. The samurais were placed on the same social plane as the commoners and were expected to earn their living by whatever occupations they could find. Consequently the process of disintegration that had been going on in the family system of the masses now repeated itself in that of the samurai class. And as the classes merged, the individual came to take the place of the family as the important unit in the new society reared on the basis of money exchange and valuation.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE FALL OF THE SHOGUNATE

IT was inevitable that the social and economic forces created by the penetration of the money economy should undermine the Shogunate, for it was based on feudal principles and functioned under rice economy. As had been shown in the preceding chapters, practically all the efforts of the Tokugawa government to cope with the various problems brought forth by the increasing use of money were fruitless. Whenever the government tried to reform the currency, the economic conditions went from bad to worse. When it tried to adjust the price of rice, it found itself in a dilemma: if it tried to save the samurai class by raising the price of rice, the ever-growing cry of the proletarian masses for cheaper rice could not be stopped; and if cheap rice satisfied the proletarians, it was at the expense of the samurai class, whose income consisted in the proceeds from the sale of the tax-rice. Thus the government continually oscillated between price-raising and price-lowering legislation without bringing any enduring relief to either class. The frequent recoinage caused perpetual confusion in the money market. The government attempted in vain to regulate money transactions in order to prevent money-changers from making unreasonable profits. The overwhelming control of industry and commerce by the guilds brought about the enactment of many laws counteracting and prohibiting various anti-social trade practices, but the government was so easily tempted by substantial thank-money from the merchants that the various laws unfavorable to the merchants

were practically dead letters. When the government was struck by the extravagance and luxury of the rising commoners, it issued many ordinances regulating the standard of living. These sumptuary laws were not only evaded, they were actually mocked by the people who had learned to enjoy life in spite of the government. Laws were powerless to check the decline of the village community, upon which the whole economy of the government depended. Young people broke away from their parents and native villages in order to seek an independent livelihood in towns; even the sacred system of the family began to show signs of disintegration.

The incompetency of the Shogunate was miserably displayed in every direction. If it was to survive, a radical reorganization of the whole system of the government was necessary, but for such an immense task there were neither statesmen nor funds.

The statesmen of the Shogunate were recruited from among the relatives of the Shogun or the *fudai* daimyos, who had been close friends and followers of the Tokugawas through many generations. Although a progressive political philosopher like Kumazawa Banzan held the democratic principle that the government ought not to be monopolized by the Shogun and a few privileged men but that any daimyo, whether *fudai* or *tosama*,<sup>1</sup> should be called to participate in the government, the Shogun was too afraid to entrust his government to the *tosama* daimyos, who were his potential enemies. Political rights for commoners were inconceivable in those days. It was the universally accepted principle that the government existed to govern the people and that the duty of the people was to obey the lord. The governing class was identified with heaven, while the governed was identified with the earth; the former was high

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *supra*, ch. 1.

while the latter was low. And there was no ladder between the two. One who was born to the earthly stock must remain there forever, while one who was born to the heavenly stock was destined to rule the people beneath. Those who were born to the governing class were trained to govern the people in accordance with the sacred law of the founder of the Tokugawa régime; they were bred in the atmosphere of tradition and conservatism, holding steadfastly to the belief that everything that maintained the sacred order of society was good, while everything that tended to change it was bad. It is little wonder, then, that there did not appear a political genius in the great crisis of the Tokugawa régime.

In spite of the rapid changes that were taking place in the economic and social institutions, the organization of the government was little changed. It was hardly more than the outgrowth of the feudal household management of the Tokugawa family. There were variously graded official titles such as *Rochu*, *Wakadoshiyori*, *Sobayonin*, *Metsuke* and *Yokome*; but the holders of these titles were all more or less functionaries of the Shogun. There was no law as to the number of officials of each rank or as to the term of office, for the Shogun appointed or dismissed his officers whenever and in whatever way he chose; but as a rule there were several members in each office, who took turns in being on duty. Since there was little coordination, an officer on duty seldom knew exactly what his colleagues had been doing while on duty. There was, moreover, no clear-cut distinction between the powers of the different classes of officials. Although in general, the *Rochu* supervised the daimyos and the *Wakadoshiyori* took charge of the retainers of the Shogun,<sup>1</sup> and although the official ranks were in the order of the *Rochu*, the *Wakadoshiyori* and the *Sobayonin*, the real political power did not abide with any

<sup>1</sup> Ogyu Sorai, *Seidan*, 1725, B.J.A.P., vol. iii, p. 435.

particular class. It was Hotta Masatoshi, a *Rochu*, who was the most powerful statesman in the earlier part of Tsunayoshi's administration, but later a *Sobayonin*, Yanagisawa Yoshiyasu, held supreme power. It was Arai Hakuseki, the scholarly attaché of *Wakadoshiyori* in Iyenobu's administration, who was the guiding spirit of that period. All the officials were free to approach the Shogun directly to advise him on all aspects of the government. Thus they found an easy way to satisfy personal ambitions, especially when the Shogun was either young or weak. Thus conspiracies and intrigues abound in the history of the Shogunate. Just as there was no clear-cut distinction in the functions of the different offices, so was there no definite official building for each group of officials. They assembled in various parts of the Shogun's castle and discussed matters at any time and in any manner. They took little trouble to keep the records of the proceedings. Only miscellaneous records were kept by various officials, who put them away in the private bureaus in a haphazard way. It is little wonder that modern historians have tremendous difficulty in collecting materials for the study of the Tokugawa period.

The weakness in organization was evident also in the local government. The agricultural districts of the Shogun's domain were governed by *daikans*, official representatives of the Shogun. The Shogun often chose his *daikans* from among his favorite samurais whose economic situation was unfavorable, because the official position in the agricultural districts enabled the samurais to recover their economic strength through the exploitation of the peasants. Each *daikan* selected his associate officials: he was the tax-gatherer, the administrator and the judge of the several villages under his jurisdiction. In towns, the official representative of the Shogun was called *machibugyo*, or town administrator. There were several *machibugyos* in large



towns like Yedo and Osaka, and they took charge in turns. Their chief function was to proclaim the edicts of the Shogun and to listen to the lawsuits of the townspeople. Besides the *daikans* and the *machibugyos*, there were also the *jishabugyos*, who had charge of everything connected with the temples and shrines as well as of the tradesmen in remote districts and the peasants outside the jurisdiction of the *daikan*.<sup>1</sup> They could also take up lawsuits and prosecute law-breakers. The paramount duty of these local officials was to enforce the decrees of the Shogun. But the decrees and edicts of the central government were so numerous that it was hard to remember them, and they were so inconsistent, due to the lack of coordination between the Shogun's ministers, as stated above, that the decree which was proclaimed on a certain day was often withdrawn on the following day, when an entirely different law might be issued. Consequently, each local official followed the customs of the district and although he announced the proclamations of the central government in a solemn and dutiful manner, he did not take great care to enforce them.

Another limitation of the Shogunate was its inability to interfere with the internal government of the daimyos. When the Tokugawa Iyeyasu laid the foundation of the Shogunate in the beginning of the seventeenth century, he took precautions not to offend the daimyos, whose rank had been his own under the Toyotomi régime. His policy was to reduce the economic strength of the daimyos and to prevent conspiracy. It was in accordance with this policy that the Shogun required the daimyos' residence to be in Yedo. In regard to the internal affairs of the daimyos' individual domains, the Shogun sagaciously followed the policy of non-interference; each daimyo governed his province quite independently as a completely self-sufficient economy. With the

<sup>1</sup> Dazai Shundai, *Keizai Roku*, 1729, B J.A.P., vol. vi, p. 73

growth of money economy, however, the exchange of goods between different daimiates became common, while various daimyos sent the products of their provinces to the markets of the principal cities, such as Yedo and Osaka, which were under the direct jurisdiction of the Shogunate. The Tokugawa government attempted to regulate the municipal trade, which was growing more and more complex, but since most of the provinces which sent their products to the cities were outside of the jurisdiction of the Shogunate, the orders of the government could not be carried very far. Indeed, this inability of the Tokugawa government to interfere with the internal affairs of the daimyos was one of the grave reasons for its downfall.

In addition to the lack of statesmanship and the inadequacy of organization, the Shogunate suffered from financial embarrassment. In spite of the fact that the penetration of money economy was changing the whole economic organization of the country, the finance of the Shogunate was still hardly more than the private finance of the Tokugawa family. The produce of the Shogun's domain amounted to eight million *koku*, of which one-half was given to the retainers as fiefs, while the other half was the income of the Shogun to be spent in any manner he pleased. The domestic expenses of the Shogun's family, including everything from the wardrobe of the Shogun's wife down to the pickles for the maid-servants were paid out of the Shogun's treasury, as well as the public expenses and the salaries of the samurais in attendance. Besides the annual revenues, the Shoguns of the earlier period had a considerable amount of gold and silver, which had been stored up since the time of Ieyasu; but through the extravagance of succeeding Shoguns, the riches of the Tokugawas were greatly diminished. The fifth Shogun, Tsunayoshi, especially, who was extremely superstitious, built many temples and spent an enormous

sum of money on dogs and other creatures lest he should be condemned by evil spirits. He was, moreover, a great lover of grandeur and luxury to the point of nearly emptying his treasury. All the Shoguns were more or less extravagant in their private life. They kept many concubines; some of them had as many as fifty children; and the expense of maintaining such large families was gigantic.

Neither was there any definite organization for the management of the Shogun's treasury. What was called the office of accountants consisted of four chief accountants, four or five supervisors and several scores of minor accountants. They seem to have managed the receiving of the tax-rice and money and the paying of stipends to the Shogun's retainers and servants. They did not have much power over the direction of the financial policy of the Shogunate, which was in the control of the more important statesmen such as the *Rochu* and the *Wakadoshiyori*. When there was no strong minister in the Shogun's government, however, an ambitious accountant would try to wield more power in the fiscal management of the Shogunate. An example of this kind is furnished by Omino Kami Shigehide, who was a supervisor in the accountants' office during the Genroku period. It was he who proposed and carried out the recoinage of Genroku VIII (1695) without even receiving the signed approval of the *Rochu*. Later his fiscal policy was severely attacked by Arai Hakuseki, whose influence prevailed upon the Shogun to dismiss Shigehide and to order that henceforward fiscal matters must be submitted to the deliberation of the *Rochu*.<sup>1</sup> Usually, however, not only the *Rochu* but any statesman who had strong influence over the Shogun controlled the finances of the Shogunate. Throughout the Tokugawa period, there existed no far-reaching fiscal policy.

<sup>1</sup> Arai Hakuseki, *Oritaku Shiba no Ki*, about 1717, vol. ii, p. 60.

Owing to this weakness in organization as well as to the extravagance of the Shogun in his personal life, the Shogun's annual account began to show a deficit, which already by the end of the seventeenth century amounted to over 1,700,000 *ryo* each year.<sup>1</sup> The usual measures of relief were found in the debasement of the currency, the imposed contributions from the daimyos and the thank-money from powerful merchants. The first debasement of the currency, which took place in 1695, brought about five million *ryo* to the Shogun's treasury; and from the subsequent debasements the government made more or less profit. But such frequent debasement of the currency caused the people to distrust the Shogun's government; the better coins were quickly withdrawn from circulation before they came into the hands of the Shogun; and prices rose higher than ever. Consequently, the debasement of the currency could not ultimately save the government from financial embarrassment. Rather it caused a great deal of disturbance in the social and economic conditions of the country.

The call for contributions from the daimyos whenever the Shogun needed a fund for some special purpose had been a favorite policy of the Shogunate from the beginning of its régime. Since it was the policy of the earlier Shoguns to weaken the economic strength of the daimyos, they made various pretexts for wringing money out of the daimyos. They demanded contributions for the repair of their castles, the building of canals, roads and bridges, as well as of temples. At first, the daimyos, who were afraid of the Shogun's wrath, obeyed his orders for contributions; but gradually they began to feel the strain of these obligations and also of the increasing luxury resulting from their residence in Yedo. It became difficult for the Shogun, therefore, to exploit the daimyos much further. Yet the Sho-

<sup>1</sup> Arai Hakuseki, *Oritaku Shiba no Ki*, about 1717, vol. II, pp. 6-11.

gun's government had to call for contributions on many urgent occasions. As the result of the great typhoon in 1718 and the big fires in Yedo in 1720 and 1721, the Shogun had to meet a most critical situation, and he called for the contribution of a hundred *koku* per ten thousand *koku* from each daimyo. But fearing the resentment of the daimyos, the Shogun shortened the term of the daimyos' residence in Yedo to six months in return for the contribution<sup>1</sup>. Although a few years later the term of residence was again made one year, the Shogun could no longer exercise such absolute power over the daimyos as had his early predecessors. Now he had to offer something in exchange, such as high titles and other intangible honors, whenever he asked for contributions. By the middle of the nineteenth century even the wives of the daimyos, who had been practically hostages to the Shogun, were allowed to visit their native provinces freely.

When the decline of the samurai class became so apparent that the Shogun could no longer count upon them, he found a new and more hopeful source of revenue in the rising merchant class. In those days, there was no other concept of taxation than that on land, and the merchants who were engaged in selling and buying escaped taxation. But it was an obvious fact that the merchants were getting richer and richer, and it did not take the Shogun long to find a means for getting money out of the merchants. The government began to grant various privileges to wealthy merchants in exchange for substantial thank-money, and there were created a class of merchants who were ranked in the samurai class as a reward for their financial support of the government. When the weakness of the Shogunate was so pitifully disclosed, the merchants no longer needed the protection of the Shogun in their trade practices. On the contrary,

<sup>1</sup>Katsumi Kuroita, *Kokushi no Kenkyu* (Tokyo, 1918), p. 800.

they now became strong enough even to oppose the government's interference with their business. When Tanuma Okitsugu, the most powerful minister of the tenth Shogun, Iyeharu, established a bureau of censorship for the silk trade and demanded that the wholesalers pay half a *momme* of silver per hundred *momme*<sup>1</sup> of silk thread and a quarter *momme* of silver per roll (= about fifty yards) of silk fabric, the wholesalers stopped buying any more silk from the manufacturers in order to resist the levy. The boycotted manufacturers, threatened with the loss of their business, united to force the government to repeal the act.<sup>2</sup> Many other similar attempts of the government to impose taxation upon the merchant class were met by threatening attitudes of the merchants; indeed, the downfall of several ministers of the Shogun toward the end of the régime was due to their failure to deal successfully with the rich merchants.

In the meantime, the village community, the backbone of the Shogunate, was fast declining. The peasants were no longer so meek as to toil silently in order to produce wealth for the ruling class. On the other hand, in the cities, the ideal of liberty was being fostered among the merchants, to whom the constant begging and demanding and jealous interference of the government was becoming unbearable. Thus the hearts of the masses were turning farther and farther away from the government of the Shogun, and the atmosphere in the middle of the nineteenth century was heavy with impending catastrophe. It was through this popular unrest that the opponents of the Shogunate were able to carry out the overthrow of the Tokugawa régime, for which they had been patiently and silently waiting for the past two hundred and fifty years.

<sup>1</sup> One *momme* is equal to 0.1325 ounces.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 816.

The most powerful opponents of the Tokugawas were the strong *tozama* daimyos of Satsuma, Tosa, Hiizen and Choshu. These *tozama* daimyos had always stood apart from the Tokugawa government, as their ancestors were the most fearful rivals of Tokugawa Iyeyasu. This position saved the *tozama* daimyos from entanglement in the terrible financial situation of the Shogunate. Owing to this fact and to their far-sighted policy of encouraging industry and commerce their domains were growing prosperous, while the rest of the daimyos were being economically ruined in the period of transition from rice economy to money economy. Along with the *tozama* daimyos, there were also *ronins*, or those floating samurais who had been detached from their feudal lords and were waiting for the opportunity to overthrow the existing order. Since they were the victims of the declining feudalism, they were strongly convinced that unless the Shogunate were destroyed there would be no hope for them. It was among these opponents of the Shogunate that the idea was developed that the Shogun was the usurper of the Mikado, who was the sole legitimate ruler of Japan; and the cry, "Exalt the sovereign," became an enthusiastically accepted slogan of the people, whose discontent against the high-handed rule of the Shogun was growing deeper and deeper.

Meantime the new problems resulting from the inauguration of diplomatic and commercial intercourse with the western nations emphasized still further the inadequacy of the Shogunate. In this situation, the opposition did what it could to embarrass the government by exploiting the anti-foreign sentiment of the more conservative elements in the population, whose slogan was, "Expel the barbarians!" The natural outcome of this agitation was a series of demonstrations against the foreigners and those who dealt with them. On March 3, 1860, the *ronins* of Mito assassinated

Ii Naosuke, the minister of the Shogun who had signed a treaty with the United States of America. There were frequent assassinations of foreigners by *ronins*, and the Shogun was forced to pay the foreign countries heavy indemnities each time such attacks were made upon foreigners, a factor which added to his financial distress. In the meantime, the *tosama* daimyos gathered around the imperial court in Kyoto and upheld the Mikado as the sole legitimate ruler of Japan. The further prolongation of the life of the Shogunate was made impossible; the demand of the *tosama* daimyos for the Shogun's resignation was instantly complied with by Tokugawa Keiki; and the sovereign power of the Mikado was restored in October, 1867.

The preceding study of the political conditions in the later Tokugawa period culminating in the great political revolution is but one of the instances which prove that the character of a government largely reflects the economic condition of that country. It was neither the doctrine of the divine right of the Mikado nor the doctrine of the exclusion of foreigners that had really brought about the great change, the chief cause of the downfall of the Shogunate lay in the economic condition of the country, which had outgrown the feudal government. Indeed, this fact is clearly indicated even in the letter of the last Shogun, Keiki, addressed to the imperial court on October 4, 1867, in which he intimated his intention of resigning and stated. ". . . My ancestor had received more confidence and favor from the emperor than any of his predecessors, and his descendants have succeeded him for more than two hundred years. Though I perform the same duties of administration, dissatisfaction is now manifested in all affairs of the State. . . ." <sup>1</sup> He was quite sincere in saying that he "performed the same duties of

<sup>1</sup> G. E. Uyebara, *The Political Development of Japan, 1867-1909* (New York, 1910), p. 50.



administration " and yet failed to satisfy the people; but he was scarcely conscious that the dissatisfaction was really due to this sameness of administration in spite of the economic changes that had been taking place in society. The cause of his fall lay in his failure to adjust his government to the new demands of the period.

Thus the doctrine of the divine right of the Mikado and the doctrine of the divine seclusion of the nation from foreign nations were both slogans to mobilize the entire force of the country at the crisis. This is evident when we study the events that immediately followed the restoration of the Mikado's rule. Notwithstanding the real strength of the anti-foreign feeling in certain quarters, the more intelligent leaders of the imperialist party recognized the necessity and desirability of foreign intercourse. Consequently, the moment the feudal government had gone out of existence by the resignation of the Shogun, the outcry against foreigners ceased. The leaders of the Restoration movement completely changed their attitude toward the foreigners, as was shown in a memorial presented to the emperor by the powerful daimyos of Echizen, Tosa, Choshu, Satsuma, Hizen and Aki. It states: " Among the pressing duties of the present moment, we venture to believe it to be preeminently important to put the question of foreign intercourse in a clear light. . . . We pray that the important personages of the court will open their eyes and unite with those below them in a single-minded manner, and that our deficiencies be supplied with what foreigners are superior in, an enduring government be established for future ages." <sup>1</sup> This memorial was favorably received by the emperor, and as the result an imperial ordinance was issued announcing the open-door policy. To confirm the ordinance and to convince the foreign powers of the sin-

<sup>1</sup> G. E. Ueyhara, *The Political Development of Japan, 1867-1909* (New York, 1910), p. 55.

cerity of the Japanese nation the emperor gave audience to the foreign representatives on March 25, 1868. Again the cosmopolitan attitude of the new government was further shown in the "Charter Oath of Five Articles," in which the emperor proclaimed, "Knowledge and learning shall be sought for all over the world, that the foundations of the imperial polity may be greatly strengthened." Such a proclamation would never have been possible if the clamorous anti-foreign agitation preceding the downfall of the Shogunate had been the real concern of the nation. The anti-foreign agitation had already achieved its end when the Shogun resigned his post as the ruler of the country. Had the Shogun's government held the anti-foreign policy at that time, his opponents might reasonably have adopted its opposite, the open-door policy. The point is that the main object of many—perhaps most—of those who promoted the agitation was to embarrass the Tokugawa government to the limit. The country had passed from feudal economy to national economy, and with the growth of national economy a greater sphere of commerce was necessary in order further to increase the capital of the nation. It is little wonder, therefore, that the new government, which was built upon national economy, proclaimed without a moment's hesitation the open-door policy, which was the next step in the economic development of the Japanese nation.

Neither was the divine right of the emperor the real concern of the nation, although the people sincerely believed it to be so. The Shintoism, which sanctified the divine origin of the imperial house and taught that all the subjects of Japan were the descendants of the branches of the central imperial family, certainly served the purpose of uniting the nation at the most critical period of Japanese history, but the underlying motive of the political struggle was not the restoration of the absolute power of the Mikado but the destruction of the

Shogun's government To be sure there had been a great revival of learning as regards Japanese literature, the central thought of which lay in Shintoism, but this revival was rather the effect than the cause of the movement for the establishment of the new government The economic changes that had been taking place during the later Tokugawa period had gradually prepared the minds of the people to accept a new political theory which would rationalize their dissatisfaction with the existing government and their aspirations for a new social order Thus the merit of the Japanese scholars like Kamono Mabuchi and Motoori Norinaga did not lie in initiating the movement for the restoration, but in supplying a philosophy to a movement already started.

The immediate goal of the movement was the abolition of the feudal government which had become incompatible with the new economic conditions created through the penetration of money economy. When that was done, the next step in the development took care of itself. The centralized government under the Mikado took the place of the decentralized government under the Tokugawa régime. This was the natural outcome of the breaking down of the self-sufficient economy of the feudal principalities due to the now universalizing effects of money economy. The fact that the new government was not purely the outcome of the zeal of the patriots to restore the divine right of the emperor is clearly shown in the political reforms that immediately followed the establishment of the Mikado's government If the doctrine of the divine origin of the imperial house upheld by the leaders of the Restoration had been logically followed, the natural course of the movement should have been toward the establishment of an absolute monarchy. But the economic and social forces of the country were not moving toward such a goal. While the mystical attitude of the people toward the royal family was still

working powerfully to unite and solidify the nation, the social and economic currents of the period were such that neither the Mikado himself nor the leaders of the Restoration were disposed to establish an autocratic government. The liberal spirit that had been created by the penetration of money economy was reflected in the abolition of the absurd old court customs and of the traditional exclusiveness of the hereditary posts in the government, and in the utilization of men of ability and knowledge for the construction of the new government, irrespective of their social status. The famous "Charter Oath of Five Articles," which was proclaimed by the Mikado on April 6, 1868, sums up concisely the fundamental principles by which the newly established government was to be guided. It states.<sup>1</sup>

- Article I. An assembly widely convoked shall be established, and all affairs of State decided by impartial discussion.
- Article II. All administrative matter of State shall be conducted by the cooperative efforts of the governing and the governed.
- Article III. All the people—officials, soldiers and others—ought to be prevented from becoming idle and discontented by encouraging the achievement of their legitimate desires.
- Article IV. All absurd old usages shall be abandoned and justice and righteousness shall regulate all actions.
- Article V. Knowledge and learning shall be sought for all over the world, and thus the foundations of the imperial polity be greatly strengthened.

The first and the second articles show that the position of the commoners had been raised to such a degree that the rulers realized that no government which refused to hear

<sup>1</sup> G. E. Ueyehara, *The Political Development of Japan, 1867-1909* (New York, 1910), p. 57.

their voices would be safe. And this rise of the common people was the result of the money economy which enabled them to acquire sufficient economic strength to assert their political rights. The legislators and the ethical teachers of the Tokugawa régime had endeavored to prevent the idleness and discontent of the people by means of various negative measures, but they had never realized that it was precisely those oppressive and suppressive measures of the government that were causing general apathy and discontent. In Article III of the Charter Oath, the really effective remedy for the conditions prevailing in the later Tokugawa period was at last found. It lay in the recognition of the right and freedom of individuals to pursue their happiness through "the achievement of their legitimate desires." This was the social attitude created by the penetration of money economy, an attitude which enabled individuals to satisfy their wants independently of the limitations of their natural groups, and in which the accumulation of wealth depended largely upon the unrestrained action of acquisitive individuals or groups of individuals. The last two articles of the Charter Oath are the definite endorsement of liberalism fostered among the masses, in whose life money had become the controlling factor. The ever-expanding force of money economy led the people to become more indifferent toward the time-honored usages and customs and more progressive and forward-looking. One may think that Japan is indebted to Commodore Perry for her progress as a modern nation; but the more careful study of the later Tokugawa period leads us to conclude that even without the influence of the foreign powers, the next inevitable step in the development of the Japanese nation would have been the establishment of a constitutional government. The visit of Commodore Perry and the influence of other foreign powers merely precipitated the event which was destined to take

place when the pressure of economic forces within the country had become strong enough to throw open the door to foreign intercourse. The ruin of the feudal government, the building-up of a centralized constitutional government and the subsequent development of Japan as a world power are the stages of political history Japan has passed through since the middle of the nineteenth century; and it was the penetration of the money economy that necessitated and brought to fulfillment the political evolution.

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## GLOSSARY

- Bu, the smallest gold coin in the Tokugawa period, equivalent to one quarter of a *ryo* of gold or fifteen *momme* of silver
- Chobu, an area, about 245 acres.
- Fudai daimyo, those daimyos, or feudal lords, who had been more or less dependent upon the Tokugawa family for some generations before the establishment of the Shogunate
- Hyo, a straw bag of rice usually containing 35 *koku* or about 189 bushels
- Kin, a weight, equivalent to 160 *momme*, or about 212 ounces.
- Koban, the name of a gold coin in the Tokugawa period, equivalent to one *ryo*
- Koku, 512 bushels (dry).
- Kwamme, kwan, 228 pounds, one thousand *momme*, or *mon*
- Momme, the unit of the silver coin in the Tokugawa period, a weight equivalent to .133 ounces.
- Mon, the unit of the copper money in the Tokugawa period; the legal ratio of exchange was 4,000 *mon* to 50 *momme* of silver, or one *ryo* of gold
- Ronin, literally, men of waves, those samurais who did not have any particular lord to serve
- Ryo, the unit of the gold money in the Tokugawa period. One *ryo* in the beginning of the Tokugawa period is equivalent to 1064 *yen* of the present currency, according to Professor Tokufuyo Yokoi
- Sho, or *koku* or 159 quarts; 0.48 standard gallon
- Tan, 01 *chobu* or 245 acres.
- To, 01 *koku*.
- Tozama daimyo, those daimyos who had been rivals of the Tokugawa family before the establishment of the Shogunate.



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